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CHURCH OF ENGLAND

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B.

A HISTORY  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND

*PRE-REFORMATION PERIOD*

BY

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## PREFACE.

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It is to be presumed that a reason may be assigned for every book which is written. It may not always be evident to the reader, but the author must be conscious of some cause which moved him to write.

In the present instance the moving cause was the lack of any work which seemed to the writer to trace the long story of the Church of England with sufficient brevity and sufficient fulness. Dry epitomes there are in abundance. Scholarly researches into the most remote past come forth year by year. The history of portions of the long centuries, or personal narrative, has been often written with appreciative genius. But there seemed more than room for a connected narrative which might be useful to one who is commencing acquaintance with English Church history, and which might also possess sufficient interest for the general reader. The Church of England is at once old and new. It has been reformed, but its heritage has come down to it through more than a millennium. To trace the main lines of national Church life ever leading on steadfastly towards the divinely foreknown new birth at the Reformation, and at the same time to gather up

step by step by the wayside notes, personal, legal, or antiquarian, which might serve to illustrate the past or to account for the present, has been the object of the author. He has allowed, as far as seemed possible in so limited an area, some writer of each age to speak his own words and breathe his own sentiments. If some other ancient writer may somewhat vary the utterance, yet by this means only the pulse of the national heart can be felt beating, however faintly, in what would otherwise be a modernised narrative; and thus only can the life of the past centuries breathe a still perceptible life into the pages.

All history, even the most exhaustive chronicles, even the files of the *Times*, which day by day sweeps into its columns the news of the whole earth, must be a selection. The more brief the history, the more difficult becomes the exercise of judgment in selecting and of tact in reporting. Here comes the personal element in the authorship. To choose this, to reject that; to condense, even with a conscious sense of dryness, one half century, to give the reins to a more flowing narrative in another; to pass without comment twenty lives, to criticise and analyse the principles of another—this is the anxiety of choice, this is where one mind will hardly run parallel with another. Yet the author hopes that, though other minds might have exercised the prerogative of selection otherwise, it may be acknowledged upon the whole that he has thrown down no *disjecta membra* of past ages, but a collection of facts grouped into an organised body of history, which possesses life and advances ever steadily onwards to the end.

By many minds it will be reckoned a blemish that these pages have been written from a national rather than from an ecclesiastical point of view. If the ecclesiastical life were identical with the spiritual life, the blemish would be acknowledged. But feeling, as the author does most keenly, that the case is otherwise, and that when the ecclesiastical life was most vigorous, even dominating the civil life of the nation, then the spiritual pulse throbbed most feebly, and was failing even unto the faintness that comes before death, he must maintain his position. He would desire to judge fairly and gently the great men of old in State and Church. They played the part which Providence assigned them. They led the nation on, not knowing whither it was going. They did their work in building up this England which we have inherited. They are our forefathers, we should speak of them reverently. We owe them gratitude for many deeds of high courage, for the foundations of justice and of empire which they laid, for much wise forethought and political sagacity. In all this to the great ecclesiastics must be adjudged by no means the least share of well-merited fame. But their eminent services cannot inspire in the author's mind a sympathy with a system which he deems untrue.

The national point of view, then, has been that from which these pages are written. And the national point of view is distinctly anti-papal. It has been so for full three hundred years, and for another full three hundred years before that. Why should this be deemed controversial or sectarian? It may be both, but it need be neither. For in very fact the papal thread is that which runs down through all those centuries. It gives



unity to their consideration, and, apart from its guidance, there is nothing but unintelligible confusion. Therefore it has suggested the arrangement of the following chapters.

With regard to the materials for this history, the author can only profess diligence in research, and an earnest effort for accuracy in the use of that which has come to his hand. All persons of historical information know the sources which lie open to investigation, and they know also how easy it is to throw together references at the foot of the page which may bespeak multifarious learning. The distinguished scholars who have pursued laborious investigations for the last forty years have not indeed revolutionised history, for its main landmarks are immutable, but they have poured floods of light upon it illuminating its darkest recesses. The names of Kemble, of Reeve, of Freeman, of Stubbs, of the careful editors of the Rolls Series, and many more will at once rise to the mind. And it was in no small degree because these men had laboured, and because it seemed that such a history as the present might now be written more lucid than those of old because of the light which they had kindled, that the author undertook this work.

It seemed undesirable in such a volume to multiply references, or to make a display of reading. But in all leading portions the authorities mainly followed have been carefully stated, little as their scanty mention will set forth the manifold labour. Bearing in mind the pleasure and benefit of the general reader, quotations have been almost entirely stripped of their Latin dress, and have been presented in English more or less literal,



paraphrastic, original or borrowed, as seemed in each case needful or sufficient.

Briefly, then, the author would say, that his object in writing has been not to set forth his individual opinions, though these are not dissembled, but to represent in lucid narrative how things came to be as they are in this Church of England. Dealing with so many diversified details and often complicated technicalities, and having only the rare intervals of a laborious life at his disposal, he cannot but fear lest the accuracy he has desired may here or there have evaded his pursuit. In this case kindly criticism, or even the more severe judgment which may fall to his lot, will bring the needful correction. It is hoped it may not be a presumptuous desire that in course of time this may stand as the first volume of a more or less continuous History of the Church of England. But a disposing Providence alone can bring about the realisation of that wish. Meanwhile the present volume is at least an earnest and conscientious effort to discover and declare the truth.



# CONTENTS.

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CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE EARLY CELTIC CHURCHES . . . . .	1
II. THE FOUNDATION OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH . .	30
III. THE ORGANISATION AND LEARNING OF THE EARLY ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH . . . . .	62
IV. THE SAINTS OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH . . .	90
V. THE LATER HISTORY OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH .	113
VI. THE CONQUEST . . . . .	137
VII. THE GROWTH OF THE PAPAL POWER . . . . .	166
VIII. THE CULMINATION OF THE PAPAL POWER . . .	210
IX. MEDIÆVAL INSTITUTIONS . . . . .	232
X. THE DECLINE OF THE PAPAL POWER . . . . .	254
XI. WYCLIFFE AND THE LOLLARDS . . . . .	294
XII. THE AGE OF CIVIL WARS . . . . .	333
XIII. CHURCH AND STATE ON THE EVE OF THE REFORM- ATION . . . . .	382
XIV. THE PREPARATION FOR THE REFORMATION . . .	417
INDEX . . . . .	455

*Erratum.*

Page 27, line 30, *for* sectro *read* sectio

# HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE EARLY CELTIC CHURCHES.

THE great English people, 'the English folk' of their ancient chronicles, owe little in the organisation of Church or State to the tribes which dwelt before them in the plains and forests of the old Britannia. The Franks, another Teutonic race, who became dominant in Gaul, dwelt among its former inhabitants, accepted their religion, acknowledged their bishops, preserved their cities, and at last adopted their language. Thus the French Church boasts a continuity of history and succession from that of Gaul. On the other hand, the English people, commonly styled Saxons, swept the Briton before them from the face of the earth. His tongue, his institutions, his religion perished. A new race, a new language, held the land. The Church of England, as distinguished from the British Church, was a fresh and vigorous growth from the end of the sixth century. It coloured and it received colour from 'the English folk,' whose characteristics it reproduced in their strength and their weakness.

Yet that new English Church had its relations to the older Christianity of the British isles. It is, therefore, necessary first to exhibit the history of the Celtic Churches, whether those which the English subverted, or those from which they received some of the most venerated of their teachers.

The genuine facts of the earlier portions of that history are but few, and the merest skeleton might sufficiently produce them. It might, indeed, be possible to prolong the recital considerably were it wise to dwell upon the legends with which subsequent ages peopled the void of former centuries. In civil history the diligence of unknown authors constructed the marvellous story of an ancient British empire, originating with the fall of Troy, and expiring after a revived brilliancy in the exploits of Arthur, king of men. Geoffrey of Monmouth and his compeers, with the sober gravity of veracious chroniclers, related the history to the twelfth century, which with equal gravity received it. The Scottish writers of the next century, not to be outdone, constructed an equally elaborate series of Caledonian sovereigns, in like manner drawing their original from wandering Grecian princes.<sup>1</sup> Their princely blood and regal descent thus established gained for David King of Scotland and his successors the imperial right of unction from the Pope. For of old time the kings of France and England alone shared this with the Emperor. But this was not all. By the order of James VII. the portraits of the whole series were imagined and painted to deck the walls of his restored palace of Holyrood, where they still attract the astonished and bewildered gaze of the perplexed tourist. The Englishman has long been content to abandon his line of Trojan princes

<sup>1</sup> See Burton's *Hist.*, iv. 126.



to the elfin land of Spenser's 'Faery Queen.'<sup>1</sup> But it is only of recent years that the Scottish patriot has permitted a doubt to be cast on Buchanan's roll of the ancient Caledonian empire.

It cannot be said that the ecclesiastical historians were as successful as the civil in filling up that vacuum which they, equally with nature, abhor. But their creations have been sufficiently bold, and deprived of these we shall have but scanty matter wherewith to supply this first chapter of the History of the Church of England.

The genuine materials of the early history of the British Church have been long ago collected, and are at once subjoined.

Clement<sup>2</sup> of Rome, writing in the first century, says of St. Paul that 'he taught righteousness to the whole world and came to the bound of the west.'

Tertullian<sup>3</sup> (about A.D. 200), in a highly rhetorical passage, speaks of 'regions of the Britons, inaccessible to the Romans, being subjugated to Christ.'

Origen<sup>4</sup> (about A.D. 239), in his homilies, in general and rhetorical language, speaks of Britain possessing the light of the Gospel.

In another passage, in a similar strain, he<sup>5</sup> says that very many of the Britons, Germans, &c. had 'not yet heard the word of the Gospel.'

These are all the passages written within the first three hundred years of the Christian era which speak of British Christianity. The first, indeed, does so only constructively, and would not have been quoted were it not for the use which has been so freely made of it, and the theories which have been built upon it.

<sup>1</sup> *Faery Queen*, b. ii. c. 10.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Ep. c. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Adv. Jud.* vii.

<sup>4</sup> Origen, in Ezek. iv., et in Luc. vi.

<sup>5</sup> Hom. 24 in Matt. xxiv.

Passing onward, Eusebius, writing in the first half of the fourth century, in his *History of the Church* omits all notice of this island ; but elsewhere he tells us<sup>1</sup> that ‘some of the disciples came to the uttermost parts of the earth, and others passed the ocean to those called the British Isles.’

Again he quotes the Emperor Constantine as saying that<sup>2</sup> ‘beginning at the Sea of Britain he had driven away evil and recalled the human race to the law of God, that our most blessed faith might increase through Almighty guidance.’

An anecdote recorded by Sozomen as well as by Eusebius<sup>3</sup> proves that Constantius, the father of Constantine, at least valued those among his court and attendants who openly professed their Christianity, as being persons on whom he might rely. But this does not directly bear on the Christianity of Britain itself though Constantius often resided in the island and died at York. Nor does the following expression of Sozomen<sup>4</sup> (about 443) throw any further light on the history. ‘It was no easy matter to dwell among the Gauls, or Britons, or neighbouring peoples among whom Constantine embraced the religion of the Christians before his expedition against Maxentius.’

These and many other passages brought together from Athanasius, and other writers of the fourth century, are only passing allusions to what is otherwise indubitable, the existence of the Christian Church in Britain in their days. No proof can be needed that after the conversion of Constantine Britain was christianised in the same sense as the rest of the empire whose fortunes it shared.

<sup>1</sup> *Dem. Evan.*, iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Vit. Constant.*, ii. 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Vit. Constant.*, i. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Sozomen, *Hist.*, i. 5.



But, failing earlier intimations, it will be necessary to trace any historical statements of writers of the fourth or subsequent centuries which look back to the origin of Christianity in Britain, in order to ascertain if traditionally or otherwise they were in possession of any authentic information. Of such references the following may be noted. Theodoret about 423 wrote, 'But our fishermen and publicans and the leather-worker <sup>1</sup> (St. Paul) brought the evangelical laws to all, not only to the Romans, but the Scythians, Sarmatians, and Britons.' In another passage where he speaks of St. Paul visiting 'Spain and the islands scattered in the sea,' he refers to the Mediterranean rather than the British islands.

Gildas was a British writer of uncertain date, falling within the century 450–550, during the progress of the Saxon conquest. He wrote a work of mingled lamentation and bitter denunciation over the woes and sins of the suffering Britons. This much is clear. He refers to Holy Scripture most copiously, but he is absolutely ignorant of any historical or even legendary account of the origin of Christianity in Britain. He has no information and he has no records bearing on this, nor has he ever heard of any. 'If there ever were any,' he says, 'they have been consumed in the fires of the enemy [the Saxons], or have accompanied our exiled countrymen to distant lands. He must therefore be guided by foreign documents, often fragmentary.'

Having then spoken in general terms of the conquest of Britain by the Romans, of the revolt of Boadicea, and the sanguinary vengeance which followed, he proceeds thus: 'Meanwhile these islands, remote from the visible sun, received the beams of light, that is, the

<sup>1</sup> Or skin-cutter, from an idea that his tents were made of skins.

holy precepts of Christ—at the latter part, as we know, of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar . . . These rays of light were received with lukewarm minds by the inhabitants, but they took root among some of them in a greater or less degree, until the nine years' persecution of the tyrant Diocletian.' Nothing can well be clearer than that Gildas had no information of the kind now sought. He knows that the Christian religion originated in the reign of Tiberius, and that it spread into Britain with indifferent success, yet so as to offer some mark for the persecution of Diocletian when the third century had run its course.

Looking back now to the scanty materials before us, we are able to say this, and this only. It was known to Christian writers soon after the year 200 that Christianity had penetrated into Britain. To say more than this would not be writing history. This impenetrable darkness can be strange only to those who have never asked themselves how much they really know of the history of the propagation of the faith in the first and second centuries. Men wrote, suffered, and laboured for the truth, and were content to be forgotten. Who can tell the name of the first Christian missionary who entered the gates of the mighty Rome itself, and looking up to the temple of the great Capitoline Jove, knew that the day must come, though centuries yet intervened, when the tutelary Roman idol must fall? Who can tell the history of the foundation of leading churches of old, of Alexandria, of Carthage, of Spain, of Gaul? The 'grain of mustard seed' had been cast into the earth, and its produce was springing up and spreading, but none knew what was to be the girth of its trunk, or the ample sweep of its branches; so none registered its progress, or noted the labours of those who tended it.

Leaving the first three centuries, a little more light will dawn upon us for the remainder of the British period. Early in the fourth century, as Gildas relates, speaking of the times of Diocletian, 'God kindled among us bright luminaries of holy martyrs, whose places of burial and martyrdom, if they had not been destroyed for our many crimes by the barbarians [Saxons], would have kindled the flame of divine love in the minds of beholders. I mean St. Alban of Verulam, Aaron and Julius of Caerleon, and the rest of both sexes who in different places stood firm in the array of Christ.' Gildas proceeds in rhetorical language to make general assertions with regard to the sufferings of the victims in that persecution. He is probably writing without any special information, and attributing to supposed British sufferers what he read in Eusebius or other writers of the martyrdoms in other lands. For we are expressly informed by Eusebius, Sozomen,<sup>1</sup> and others that Constantius, the father of Constantine, protected Christianity in Gaul and Britain. There is reason, indeed, to believe that this protection was not complete, and that Constantius showed some deference to the persecuting edicts. Thus, we may admit some belief in the fact of the suffering of St. Alban and his associates; but this will require separate notice.

Gildas is no more explicit in his account of Arianism in Britain, of which he says, that 'fatal as a serpent, vomiting its poison from beyond the sea, it caused deadly dissension, and inflicted dreadful wounds on a country ever desirous to hear something new, and remaining constant long to nothing.' Rhetoric of this kind is usually a cloak for lack of knowledge; at any rate it leaves its reader in darkness.

<sup>1</sup> Sozomen, i. 6.



We are, however, able to add one or two facts to this scanty allusion. There is sufficient authority for asserting that three British bishops were present at the Synod of Arles summoned by Constantine in 314 to consider the Donatist difficulty. Their names are even added. Eborius of York ; Restitutus of London ; Adelfius (perhaps of Caerleon). It is, of course, possible, though quite unknown, that Britain was represented at the great Council of Nicæa ; at any rate Athanasius says that all the Churches, those of Spain, Britain, and Gaul, and most of the Churches of the East, accepted its decrees. Other brief notices scattered in various writings show that in the fourth century the British Church shared in the anxieties and deliberations of the frequent synods held during the varying phases of the Arian controversy. At one assembled at Ariminum we are told,<sup>1</sup> that the British and Gallic bishops declined the imperial allowance, being able to maintain themselves, with the exception of three from Britain, who were obliged to accept the public provision.

When we have added to this that Pelagius, made famous by his controversy with the great Augustine, was of British origin, though Britain was not the scene of his teaching, we shall have noticed all, or nearly all, that is known of the British Church whilst it occupied what is now known as England. Jerome,<sup>2</sup> with his offensive rudeness, calls him a ‘stupid fellow overloaded with Scotch porridge.’ The account of the rise and fall of Pelagianism in Britain is given by Bede.<sup>3</sup> But as he is, in fact, adopting the account of a much earlier writer, Constantius, the author of the ‘Life of Germanus,’ it would be desirable to quote the earlier authority were

<sup>1</sup> Sulpicius Severus, ii. 41.

<sup>2</sup> In Jerem. Prolog.

<sup>3</sup> *Ecc. Hist.*, i. 17.

it not that the verbosity and inflated style of such authors would load the weary page with ten sentences of rhetoric to one of fact. It may suffice that through the luxuriance of language we can dimly descry that two Gallic bishops, Germanus of Auxerre and Lupus of Troyes, were sent across the Channel to combat the heresy. They taught with authority through the whole country, and finally encountering the Pelagian teachers, they 'poured forth torrents of eloquence, with apostolic and evangelical thunderings; vanity was convicted, perfidy confused.' 'The accused confessed that they could not reply. The people were scarcely restrained from laying violent hands on them, and accepted the decision with a shout.'

However, it required a second visit of Germanus, this time accompanied by Severus, Bishop of Treves, to complete the work. On this occasion we have an account of a miracle, described in the genuine hagiological style, followed by preaching, and the banishment from Britain of all the Pelagian teachers. As Germanus died about 448, soon after this visit, these transactions must have been among the very last in which the British Church was engaged before the Saxon invasion swept the larger portion of it from the face of the earth.

Here we might close the history of the early British Church. But we must not wholly omit notice of that which is legendary or conjectural, and has often been grafted on the slender stem of the true history.

It has been seen that Gildas, a member of the British Church during the time of the Saxon invasions, was entirely unacquainted with the origin of Christianity in Britain. The Saxon writer Bede, however, two hundred years later, thought himself justified in giving the fol-

lowing distinct and positive statement: <sup>1</sup>—‘ In the year of our Lord’s incarnation 156, whilst the holy Eleutherus presided over the Roman Church; Lucius, king of Britain, wrote to him entreating that by commission from him he might be made a Christian. He soon obtained the effect of his pious request, and the Britons preserved the faith which they had received, uncorrupted and entire, in peace and tranquillity, until the time of the emperor Diocletian.’

This story has been so often repeated, and was so generally adopted and amplified by the uncritical ages which followed, that some remarks upon it are needful, and it is at least of some interest to know its origin. It seems certain that the document from which Bede obtained it was one of those brought to him from Rome by Nothelm, who was allowed access to the various archives there. In fact there can be little doubt that it was taken from the Catalogue <sup>2</sup> of Roman Pontiffs, in which these words occur (speaking of Eleutherus), ‘ he received a letter from Lucius king of Britain, desiring to be made a Christian by a commission from him.’ Further, it appears that this passage is not traced in the older form of that document, but that it is found in a later form of it written about 530. It belongs, therefore, to the Roman mint, of which it bears the characteristic stamp. Its date of issue, too, is the time when Rome was already nursing the desire to be accounted ‘ mother and mistress of all the Churches.’ That subsequent writers, both Welsh and English, received the story and added to it in the mediæval fashion, and that a letter from Eleutherus to Lucius was in due time forthcoming, need not here be said. Modern writers, aware of the intrinsic difficulties involved even

<sup>1</sup> *Ecc. Hist.*, i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, i., App. A.



in the most rudimentary form of the story, have notwithstanding been frequently unwilling entirely to abandon it. Many webs of ingenious speculation have been spun, weaving together conjectures as to whether there may not have been some local British chieftain bearing a name Latinized into Lucius, and tolerated in some part of the island under the Roman rule. There can be no inherent impossibility in such a supposition; but when the historian finds the basis of the story to be a statement in a document inserted by an unknown hand more than four hundred years after the alleged event, in a place fruitful in historical forgeries, and in the interest of the policy of that place, he has no alternative but to dismiss it. It is not history whatever else it may be.

Passing on yet further into the domain of conjecture, a favourite topic has been the supposed preaching of St. Paul himself in Britain. The words of Clement of Rome<sup>1</sup> are here pressed into the service, and the language of Theodoret<sup>2</sup> is shown to give some countenance to the idea. But Theodoret gives no earlier authority, and seems to be simply paraphrasing in his own style the earlier and vague statements of Clement and of Eusebius.

Conjecture finds some footing for its airy tread in certain other names presenting rather curious coincidences. In 2 Tim. iv. 21, which was undoubtedly written in the reign of Nero, and probably in the year 68, salutations are sent from Pudens, Linus, and Claudia. It further appears from an epigram of Martial, that there was a Claudia Ruffina, a British lady, married to Pudens, a Roman senator. The coincidence of names is undoubtedly striking; but it requires much more

<sup>1</sup> Page 3.

<sup>2</sup> Page 5.

than such testimony to elevate a conjecture into the rank of an established fact of history, to say nothing of chronological difficulties connected with the date of Martial's writing.

The Welsh traditions embodied in the Triads will receive various degrees of respect from different minds. Whatever may be their value, we may, however, note here that they attribute the origin of Christianity in this island to Bran, the father of Caractacus, who had been taken as a captive to Rome after the defeat of Caractacus, and who, on his return, brought Christianity with him. Some have contended for this as a genuine independent tradition; others would say that it had grown out of supposed historical probabilities in the course of centuries. We may, however, note that the Welsh authority is a thousand years subsequent to the event. The Triads give a conspicuous place to an Arwystli Hen whom they associate with Bran. He is supposed to represent an Aristobulus whom certain apocryphal assertions make St. Paul to have ordained bishop for Britain. And this seems the true account of most of such statements. The seeming tradition is for the most part but a loose and inaccurate reflection of some story of foreign origin. Thus what appear to be several independent and converging authorities are often in truth divergences from a single untrustworthy witness.

If picturesque legend may be permitted to enliven the sober page of history, we may now be allowed to admire the confidence with which it tells us that Joseph of Arimathea, accompanied by Lazarus, Mary Magdalene, and Martha, his sisters, and some others, were sent afloat by the Jews in a vessel without oars or sails. After grievous sufferings the ship came to shore at Marseilles, where they landed. Crossing over



Gaul, they arrived in Britain, and settled in Glastonbury, where they built the first Christian church. The legend takes various other forms, in which the famous Glastonbury thorn generally finds a place. It is a variety which blooms (at least occasionally) in winter, and was believed to have sprung from Joseph's staff, when, wearied with his journey, he fixed it in the ground.

But the stern evidence of historical criticism shows that not even the rudiments of this wild story were known to the Saxon Church. Ussher and Stillingfleet agree in asserting that there is no trace of it in the Saxon charters or documents, and modern investigation confirms the decision.

Indeed, if we turn to the history of the early Christianity of Britain as it was written by William of Malmesbury,<sup>1</sup> about 1130, we find him to believe the story of Lucius having written to Pope Eleutherus for Christian teachers. 'In consequence preachers came into Britain, the effects of whose labours will remain for ever, although the rust of antiquity may have obliterated their names. By these was built the ancient Church of St. Mary of Glastonbury.' Still he hazards the supposition that if, as some say, the Apostle Philip preached to the Gauls, he may have crossed into Britain also, in which case Glastonbury might have a yet earlier origin. But not a word has he to say about Joseph of Arimathea in this work. Yet in his tract on the antiquity of Glastonbury he brings that saint to the Somerset sanctuary, though not without the qualifying expression '*ut ferunt*,' as they say. The legend gradually grew up in Glastonbury itself after the Conquest.

<sup>1</sup> William of Malmes., 19, 20.

It was adopted in royal charters, and became an object of national pride. As such it was insisted on by the English representatives in the mediæval councils at Constance and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> After the Reformation it was pressed into the service of the anti-papal controversy by Archbishop Parker,<sup>2</sup> when historical criticism was in its infancy. He thought, as some seem to think now, that he had made a strong point against papal authority in England by proving that the island owed its earliest Christianity to other teachers than those who were sent by Rome. He believed in the story of King Lucius and Pope Eleutherus; and therefore gladly placed that mission second to an earlier one of Apostolic date. This is the history as Archbishop Parker arranged it in the early days of Elizabeth. The Apostle Philip being the evangelist of Gaul, sent twelve brethren, with Joseph of Arimathea at their head, to preach in Britain. Glastonbury was granted to them, and there they built a church. But this was deserted and left desolate, and in the succeeding century Christianity was reintroduced by the legates sent by Pope Eleutherus to King Lucius. Some records of Joseph's work the archbishop fancied might have been preserved at Rome; by their help the abandoned church at Glastonbury might have been searched for and discovered, and thenceforward held sacred and venerable. Thus the archbishop wove two legends into a seemingly consistent history. It was pardonable to write thus when ancient records had not been sifted, and when no man knew precisely what might be disinterred from the mass of mouldering manuscripts. It is unpardonable now to confuse men's judgment by thrusting upon them mediæval fraud,

<sup>1</sup> Ussher, *Primord.*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *De Vetustate Eccles. Britan.*, p. 4, ed. 1729.

fancy, or ignorance, as the case may be, as if it possessed any authority beyond its own.

But in the days before criticism it became almost a point of honour to maintain so dignified and ancient a source for British Christianity. Even in the reign of James I. Camden, the father of English antiquarianism, declared<sup>1</sup> that it was a matter which could not be doubted. It is true that St. George's banner only came from the East with the crusaders. Yet the fact that St. Joseph never was adopted as the national tutelary saint, like St. James of Spain, or St. Denis of France, seems to betray the late origin of his story. It was, after all, a local fable, not a legend which had grown into the heart of the nation from early times. But it was a legend which beyond most others lent itself to romance and the wildest flights of fancy. Glastonbury, the Arthurian 'Isle of Avalon,' is the very realm of fantasy. The Holy Graal,<sup>2</sup> the dish, bowl, or cup, which received the blood from the wounds of the Saviour, and was brought by Joseph from the Holy Land, floats vaguely before the imagination in connexion with Avalon. But history can only glance into the land of imagination which spreads its fair lawns and uplands far beyond her border. She must pass on her careful track, leaving it to the mediæval poet to sing of the marvels of Glastonbury.

Three hawthorns also, that groweth in Werall,  
Do burge and bear green leavés at Christmas  
As fresh as other in May, when the nightingale  
Wrests out her notes musical as pure as glass;  
Of all woods and forests she is the chief chantress.  
In winter to sing if it were her nature,  
In Werall she might have a plainé place,

<sup>1</sup> Camden's *Britannia*, art. *Glastonbury*.

<sup>2</sup> *Joseph of Arimathea*, ed. by Rev. W. W. Skeat, for the Early English Text Society.



On those hawthorns to show her notes clear.  
Thanks be given to him that in heaven sitteth,  
That flourisheth his works so on the ground,  
And in Glastonbury, *Quia mirabilia fecit.*

These legendary notices naturally lead to some further consideration of the history of St. Alban. We may hope that it would be unreasonable incredulity to reject the venerated name of the protomartyr of Britain. But it is necessary to ascertain on what testimony that belief rests. The account of the martyrdom given by Bede is a familiar narrative, but he wrote more than 400 years afterwards, and the question at once arises what was the earlier authority on which he depended. We find it in the life of Germanus, written by Constantius about 480, who describes that bishop as visiting the tomb of Alban the martyr, and taking from it some of the sacred earth. We find it more precisely in Gildas, a portion of whose narrative has been already quoted. The remainder runs as follows: 'The first of these martyrs, St. Alban, for charity's sake saved a confessor who was pursued by his persecutors and was on the point of being seized. He concealed him in his house, and then changed clothes with him. In this he imitated the example of Christ, who laid down His life for His sheep, for he exposed himself in the other's clothes to be persecuted in his stead. So pleasing to God was this conduct, that between his confession and martyrdom he was honoured with the performance of wonderful miracles in presence of the impious blasphemers who were carrying the Roman standards. Like the Israelites of old, who trod dryfoot an unfrequented path whilst the ark of the Covenant stood some time in the midst of Jordan, so also the martyr opened a path across the noble river Thames, whose waters stood like

precipices on either side. Seeing this the first of his executioners was stricken with awe, and from a wolf became a lamb ; so that he thirsted for martyrdom, and boldly underwent that for which he thirsted.'

Into this grandiose and legendary form all hagiology had by that time been cast. Prodigies of diverse kinds were copied with variations from the life of one saint into that of another. But in the midst of these wonders this much appears to be the record of a fact. When Germanus visited Britain about 429, there was a locality associated by tradition with the martyrdom of Alban. This was 125 years after the Diocletian persecution, if that date is to be preferred among the differing statements. It certainly is not a very strong basis for credence. But if the passion of that age for relics of martyrs throws a strong presumption against the truth of a large part of its legends, it must be granted, on the other hand, that if such a martyr did suffer, the fact and the place would not readily be allowed to fall into oblivion. Whatever becomes of the legendary additions, it is a satisfaction to hope that we need not abandon 'the protomartyr of Britain.'

Bede<sup>1</sup> expanded the legendary parts of the story yet more, either from the accretions it had gained from frequent narration, or from what he would deem the right mode of presenting a history of martyrdom. The monastic writers have still further amplified the legend, one of the most curious additions being the probable transformation of a cloak into a saint. The earliest version of the story, that of Gildas, makes Alban suffer for sheltering a 'confessor,' that is, a persecuted man, by exchanging clothes with him and appearing in his stead. Bede, adding further particulars, says that the sheltered

<sup>1</sup> *Ecc. Hist.*, i. 7.

person was a certain clergyman whose 'habit or cassock' Alban assumed. The 'confessor' continues to be nameless in the versions of the story until after the Conquest, when we find him recognised under the name of Amphibalus,<sup>1</sup> with elaborate accounts of his subsequent martyrdom. The long loose cloak worn by ecclesiastics, or indeed by others also, was called *amphibalum*. The supposition, therefore, is that the nameless man received his appellation from the cloak which plays so prominent a part in the narrative, and thus stands forth in legendary history as St. Amphibalus, martyr. The great abbey of St. Albans gloried for many centuries in the possession of the supposed body of its patron saint. Roger of Wendover,<sup>2</sup> one of St. Alban's own monks, may give the story, as it had come to be told about the year 1200, how the body of the protomartyr was discovered. Offa, the potent king of the Mercians, was admonished by an angel to disinter and enshrine the sacred remains. Accordingly, with his new Archbishop of Lichfield and a great concourse of people, to Verulamium went the king. 'The memory of the martyr had perished, and the place of his burial had been forgotten for about 344 years. . . . and was at this time utterly unknown.' A light from heaven shone upon the spot, and the wooden coffin enclosing his remains was discovered. Then arose, and thenceforward flourished, the great abbey till its time was come, and the reign of imposture ceased.

But, for whatever reasons, men had already connected the spot with Alban's name. For Bede, in his story of the martyrdom, had described it in language from which it might even now be recognised. It seems like a sketch from memory. Whether it was anything

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth.

<sup>2</sup> R. Wendover in ann. 793.



more than an expansion of the older narrative by Gildas it is now impossible to say. But they chose well who selected their sanctuary. The crumbling remains of the Roman city lie on a site ascending most gently above the rivulet which supplied it with water and formed the pool which protected its northern flank. On the opposite side of the stream the land rises with a somewhat steeper ascent to the crown of a long hill. There most wisely king Offa's advisers perpetuated, or chose, the scene of St. Alban's martyrdom, at the top of a sunny slope. There in after years rose the great church, which is now the cathedral of a diocese to which it has given its name. It possesses its peculiar grandeur, but it is impossible to gaze other than regretfully on its walls. The wanderer may still trace the massive foundations of the rampart with which the Romans begirt ancient Verulam. But if he would seek the battle-mented superstructure, he must look on the abbey walls; there he will see course after course of the Roman brick for which the abbots ransacked and dismantled the venerable city. The church is a noble pile, however little graceful in its outlines, but what might we not give if the abbots had but left us old Verulamium!

However, the monks found St. Alban in their own fashion, and built gloriously over that which they found. But what manner of wooden coffin that might be, and whose relics those poor bones and that dust might be before which men bowed and imagined miracles to be done in all those long centuries, it is not pleasant to think upon.

But legend breeds legend, and miracles of this class must be mated with other miracles. St. Alban had been found and held in honour for some 500 years, but where was St. Amphibalus? Thus questioned the

monks in the year 1177, which may have been a little before our informant entered the abbey. The questioning received its answer.<sup>1</sup> St. Alban himself appeared to a dependent of the abbey, or at least a devotee of the church, and indicated the spot. The story spread far and wide ; multitudes flocked to the place, which seemed like a market, and miracles were rumoured which increased the excitement. The day of St. Alban came : alms, fastings, and processions were prescribed, and the people were wrought up to the needful pitch of expectation. The saint was somewhat vengeful on those who mocked, for some such might be found even there. In this mood he wrought a wonder not quite in accordance with modern temperance principles, which may illustrate the unity of such English gatherings whatever their pretext, whether an excursion train in the nineteenth or expected miracles in the twelfth century. The English throat is apt to feel a longing for its native ale. ‘One Algar of Dunstable brought a cart with a cask of ale.’ There were no excise laws before his eyes, and he meant to sell it. ‘A poor sick man begged of him, for the love of the martyr, a small draught to quench his thirst. Algar, incensed at his request, answered that not out of regard to the martyr, but for the profit of sale he was there. Forthwith both ends of his cask fell out, and so through the saint’s interposition the poor man and many others with him drank as much as they would. So through the martyr’s hand, wickedness was repressed and the devotion of the faithful met its reward.’ The monk does not say whether the ale was good, but certainly it is a reward which would be very much to the taste of such an

<sup>1</sup> R. of Wendover in ann. 1178.



assembly of 'the faithful' as might be gathered now out of the Hertfordshire villages.

Unhappily Algar's own account is not on record. But it is much to be feared that when he drove his wearied horse into Dunstable that night, he may have told another story to his sympathising spouse: how some disorderly scoundrels—roughs they would be called at a fair in these days—had surrounded his cart, insisted on his giving them drink, had broken his cask and consumed his good liquor, and finally, denouncing him to the monks as a blasphemer of the saint, had sent him bruised and impoverished home again. But this side of these quaint stories found no encouragement in the monastic archives.

Time went on, diggers were at work, the abbot and the brethren were at dinner, while one was reading the whole of the cherished St. Alban's legend. News was brought in that the bodies were found. Ten martyrs in all lay in the place of search. St. Amphibalus was there with a knife in his skull and another in his breast in conformity with ancient story. They carried forth St. Alban to meet his brother. Generally the brethren found him heavy, now he seemed so light that he appeared to be flying. So it was that St. Amphibalus was found at last 'on the 25th of June, 1177, being the 886th year after his martyrdom.' And so it came to pass that something called by that shadowy name of a cloak, which perhaps was never worn, was added to the deceits which beguiled many a soul until the day of reckoning came. It is melancholy to look upon the ancient building shorn of its glories. It ought to be a sadder thing to know that the worn pavement and the broken shrine testify to the impostures which were

intruded between sinful man and the healing Gospel of Christ.

The history of the ancient British Church before the arrival of the Saxons will appear scanty indeed to those who are not aware how fragmentary our knowledge of that period is. We may close this account with the words of the quaint Fuller when he is ending the Third Century of his 'Church History of Britain': 'This is all I have to say of this century; and must now confess myself as unable to go on, as ashamed to break off; scarce having had of a full hundred years, so many words of solid history. But as I find little, so I will feign nothing; time being better spent in silence than in lying. If any hereafter shall light on more history of these times, let them not condemn my negligence, whilst I shall admire their happiness.'

But, strange to say, the history of the British Church has but little connection with the subsequent Christianity of England. That Church stood for the most part aloof from its Saxon conquerors, hating and disdainful. A more vigorous branch of Celtic Christianity had taken root in Ireland and poured forth its missions with rare profusion, both to the larger sister island and to the continent of Europe. Before the history of Saxon Christianity can be approached, that of the Celtic Churches of Ireland and of Scotland must receive attention.

The Roman dominion had been maintained with some difficulty as far north as the rampart which joined the firths of Forth and of Clyde. Like the rest of the Empire the southern portion of Scotland accepted Christianity after the conversion of Constantine. How far such Christianity had any hold beyond the towns and Roman stations seems at best but a very doubtful

thing. The relics of Roman heathenism are many. Those of ancient Roman Christianity are few<sup>1</sup> indeed even round the principal settlements of Imperial Britain. When the Picts finally broke through the Roman defences, and the Roman arms abandoned Scotland for ever, whatever Christianity remained in that country seems to have been in the south-west. There, among the Picts of Galloway, a certain Ninian had founded a Church. He is described by Bede<sup>2</sup> as ‘a most reverend bishop and holy man of the British nation, who had been regularly instructed at Rome in the faith and mysteries of the truth.’ The principal seat of his mission was ‘Candida Casa,’ White House, or Whitherne, in Galloway. This place recurs from time to time in subsequent centuries as the name of a see suffragan to York. It may be stated as a fact that there was a Christian Church, however feeble, in that part of Scotland early in the fifth century.

It has even been said<sup>3</sup> that Ninian passed over into Ireland and made known the Gospel there. At any rate, within the first half of the fifth century Ireland received the faith. Palladius is mentioned in Roman narratives as a bishop sent by the Pope for the conversion of that island. If he is not the same as one who is also called Patrick, nothing certain appears of his history. But Patrick is the name indelibly written on the history of Irish Christianity. This much is gathered from what are admitted to be his genuine remains. He was the son of a deacon, and grandson of a presbyter, of the Church. He was born in Britain, was captured and sold as a slave in Ireland. He escaped after some years, and formed the resolution to return as a mis-

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, iii. 4; Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, b. ii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, b. ii. 1



sionary to the scene of his captivity.<sup>1</sup> Many others, both Gauls and Britons, were associated with him in his labours, but his name stands preeminent. It may be sufficient here to say, that early in the sixth century, that which followed the labours of Patrick and his associates, Ireland had become Christian. The Church thus founded in Ireland had some remarkable characteristics. Chief among these may be named a multiplicity of bishops and a singular development of the monastic life. Monasticism, as it was known to the early Irish Church, must have been of that earlier and freer form which overran Europe at the close of the fourth century, long before the reforms of Benedict of Nursia. Coming from the deserts of Egypt, the frenzy of monasticism spread with inconceivable rapidity. It needed no lordly monastery. An encampment of huts made of planks, wattles, and reeds, round the simple oratory of the teacher or saint, and surrounded by an earthen rampart with a ditch, sufficed, and sprang up without delay or preparation. Nor did it require the vow of obedience, or the subjection to the stiffer routine which afterwards followed. Such settlements were to be seen in Gaul as well as in Britain. It may have been found of real practical utility among the heathen tribes, thus to gather for mutual instruction, as well as protection against the vices and barbarism which surged around. At any rate the early history of Irish Christianity is the history of its monasteries, and not of diocesan episcopacy. The special singularity is, that in these monasteries were many bishops of indefinite numbers, and connected with no necessary diocesan rule. This is a peculiarity which has led to much controversy. The Presbyterian has seen in it a proof of the original iden-

<sup>1</sup> Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, ii. 23.

tity of the bishop and the presbyter. On the other hand, the Episcopalian points out that one<sup>1</sup> of these bishops was always selected to perform the rite of ordination, or, if present, to consecrate the elements in the Eucharist. Still the government was in the hands of the abbot, who was usually not a bishop. So Bede,<sup>2</sup> speaking of one of their chief settlements, says that it 'has for its ruler an abbot who is a presbyter, to whose direction all the province, and even the bishops, contrary to the usual method, must be subject.' The Saxon Chronicle, too, under the year 565 notes: 'Now in Ii (Iona) there must ever be an abbot and not a bishop; and all the Scottish bishops ought to be subject to him; because Columba was an abbot and not a bishop.'

From this brief note of the history of the Irish Church we may return to the shores of Scotland.

At the time now before us the Scoti or Scots were the Irish people, and Scotia continued for many years to be the name usually given to Ireland. Some centuries passed before this nomenclature gave way, and the Scots, at last unknown in their native land, were confused with other tribes to whose glorious history they have given their name. It will be sufficient for the present purpose thus to describe the political geography of Scotland early in the sixth century, about the time when Ireland may be considered finally Christianised. The heathen Picts occupied the larger part of Scotland north of the Forth. The Britons of Strathclyde still held the territory which included Cumberland and stretched away westward and northward to the firth of Clyde. The Scots from Ireland had colonised a district which may be approximately identified with Argyleshire and some neighbouring islands,

<sup>1</sup> Reeve's *Adamnan*, p. 340.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, iii. 4.



and was generally known as the kingdom of Dalriada. The Saxons, or more accurately the Angles, had seized on the eastern lowlands, and held the land from the Tweed to the Forth. The Scots were to be the source of Christianity to nearly all this and more besides.

Amongst the most illustrious of the Irish monastic saints was Colum or Columba. Born<sup>1</sup> about 521, he was devoted to the Church from his childhood, and became known as Columcille or Colum of the Church. He belonged to the royal house of the Neills, of the north of Ireland. Many monasteries were founded by him in his own country, and looked up to him as their head. Causes, on which it is not needful here to dwell, led to his abandonment of his native land. In the year 563 he sought a new home among his kinsmen, the Scots of Dalriada, who had brought with them from Ireland the Christianity of that island. On the confines of the Scots and the Picts, Columba obtained the grant of the island now generally known as Iona. There he planted his famous monastery, which may well be deemed sacred ground by every man of English or of Scottish blood.

Doubtless the mind is variously affected by the associations which cling to the ruined seats of ancient worship or magnificence, as well as by their surrounding scenery. Fountains in its lordly park, Melrose begirt with its prosaic Scotch cemetery, Tintern in its wooded glen, excite varied reflections or call up diverse emotions. The stern architecture of the grey Iona with its tower rising against the wild Atlantic sky, while the ceaseless roar of the ocean sounds as it sounded in Columba's ear, speaks of endurance and hardihood. Legend says that Columba steered ever northward until he had found a shore from which the Ireland he had

<sup>1</sup> Reeve's *Adamnan*, p. 225.

left was no longer visible. The tale has surely done injustice in ascribing the unwisdom of mere passion to the venerable man. He chose well for his purpose. His favoured island was safeguarded by the ocean until the Northmen brought desolation to all those shores. Its limits are circumscribed, but they are not encroached upon by barren mountains, though slight rocky eminences break the force of the Atlantic gales. Fertility may be ascribed to its soil, of a degree sufficient to reward the labours of the simple cultivator, and to supply a hardy community. Severed by a narrow sound from the larger island of Mull, which lies at the portal of the deep sea loch of Linnhe, it enjoyed ready access to the great lakes where now the Caledonian Canal joins two oceans. Thus the missionary turned the great mountain barrier, and his light coracle sailed without impediment into the heart of the Pictish land, and to the doors of its king. Columba's true history must be that of the sagacious missionary, not the wild legend of a passionate fugitive. No mere accident planted him thus on the skirts of his brethren, the Scots of Dalriada, and at the very porch of the Picts, whose apostle he became.

It need scarcely be added that not a trace can well remain of the primitive settlement of Columba. Venerable, and almost weird in their antiquity, as the ruins of church and cloister seem to the modern traveller, they were the work of long subsequent centuries. At a date subsequent to the Norman Conquest, the Cluniac monks brought with them into that ocean fastness the laws and the architecture of their continental home. And window and arch which still remain speak of centuries yet later, and of work hardly finished when the Reformation left all to solitude once more. The

rude masonry of the chapel of St. Oran, one of Columba's associates, may indeed belong to a far more remote period, in spite of the Norman doorway and other archways, which seem rather the insertions of subsequent ages.

It is to this island that the preceding notes on Scottish history have been tending, and it is from this that multiplied ramifications must yet be traced. The community settled there by Columba brought with them the peculiarities already named as belonging to the Irish Church—a pervading monasticism, and a subordination, as well as multiplicity, of the episcopal order.

From Iona the personal influence of Columba rapidly spread through the land of the Picts. The king,<sup>1</sup> whose seat was near Inverness, was baptised. Monasteries of the Irish type, Christian colonies in the midst of the uncultured heathen, were placed in suitable localities, and within some twelve years the Picts and Scots (in other words, Scotland north of the Forth and Clyde) were ostensibly Christian. When Columba died, 597, he left behind him a Church organised in the peculiar manner which has been already described—episcopal but not diocesan. The primacy was in the hands of the abbots of Iona, of which Bede<sup>2</sup> thus speaks: ‘This monastery for a long time held the preeminence over those of the Northern Scots and all those of the Picts, and had the direction of their people.’ It is not necessary for our purpose to speak of Columba's successors, or the revival of Ninian's work, which had been almost extinguished among the Cumbrian Britons and Southern Picts of Galloway by Kentigern<sup>3</sup> or Mungo, the patron saint of Glasgow, a contemporary of Columba, and one

<sup>1</sup> Skene, *Celt. Scot.*, ii. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, iii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Skene, *Celt. Scot.*, ii. 179.

who represented the Welsh or British rather than the Irish type of organisation. Enough has been said to trace the origin of a Christianity which had already taken firm hold of Northern Britain while Gregory was still thinking of the fair young English boys in the slave-market of Rome, and which was destined speedily to come into collision with the Roman system on the Tyne, the Trent, and the Ouse, and on the banks of the Thames itself. The date of Columba's death, 597, is the very year in which Augustine landed in Thanet. Such a coincidence may well give the key-note on which we pause before entering on the history of the Saxon, or, more accurately, of the English Church.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE FOUNDATION OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

IF the Church historian has his own special difficulties to meet, and enigmas to solve, he may at least congratulate himself, in commencing this period of history, that he need not entangle himself far in the relations of the Picts and Scots, nor attempt to decide how far Vortigern, Hengist, Horsa, and the rest of the personages of the earlier portions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle are mythical or historical beings. It will suffice that when the lurid tempest of the Teutonic invasion of Britain has cleared away, we may discern the hardy Saxon race in full possession of the land from the German Ocean to the Severn, and from the British Channel to the Forth. Westward and northward the remnant of the Celtic Britons held the remote regions. Cornwall and Devon were theirs in whole or in part. Wales sheltered tribes which the Romans had scarcely civilised. And through parts of Cumberland and the Western Lowlands of Scotland up to the Clyde a British kingdom held sway for some centuries. Northward again beyond the Forth the Highlands of Scotland were held, as they still are, by Celtic races.

But our subject does not call us to the dubious task of attempting to describe the successive steps of the Saxon conquest. It suffices for us that in the death-throes of the Western Roman Empire during the first half of the fifth century, the Roman forces were with-



drawn from Britain. The imperial centralisation had destroyed self-reliance and power of organisation among the natives, and Britain fell an easy prey to the Saxon invaders. How long any remnant of British Christianity and civilisation may have lingered in some of the cities is unknown. Theon, a so-called archbishop of London,<sup>1</sup> and Thadioc, bishop of York, are named by mediæval chronicles as retiring into Wales with their clergy about the year 586. Certainly those imperial cities, and perhaps some others, may claim a continuous existence since the days of the Roman Empire in this island. It is, therefore, quite conceivable that the statement just mentioned may rest upon some vague tradition of vestiges of the ancient island Christianity not quite extirpated by the Saxons. But that a hierarchy remained within about ten years of the arrival of Augustine seems quite inconsistent with known history. It is clear that when Augustine landed in 597 he found the Saxons entirely heathen, and the country broken up into many kingdoms, commonly known as the Heptarchy.

In tracing the origin of Saxon Christianity it must be already clear that the mutual action of three distinct Churches has to be considered: the Roman mission of Augustine; the Scoto-Irish Church, spreading ever southward past the Forth, the Tweed, and the Humber; and the remnant of the ancient British Church seated chiefly in Wales.

The latter may most fitly be taken first.

This order arises from its claim to be the original British Church, and its consequent possession of the right of precedence. It is also more convenient, because by reason of an angry isolation from its Saxon foes, it

<sup>1</sup> R. Wendover in ann. 586; Matt. Westm.

stands apart from the subsequent history of English Christianity.

The earlier history of the British Church has already been traced to the middle of the fifth century. Since that time a thick veil had fallen over it. Isolated from continental connections, but not without frequent intercourse with Ireland, it had been driven back westward. On either shore of the Bristol Channel, through Wales, and in Cumberland it stood at bay, presenting a sullen front to the heathen foe.

When it was brought once more into contact with Roman Christianity through Gregory's mission, the British, like the Irish, Church had become somewhat of an anachronism. It seemed to have been sleeping, and awoke to find a world that had changed. It took with it into its cave the Christianity of the age of Augustine and of Jerome; or at least of the next age, that of Hilary, of Germanus, and other Gallic worthies. Then came the deluge of barbarians which shut out the distant world from view. That world had not stood still; customs had changed; doctrines had been modified; in particular the great papal idea had fructified and grown exceedingly. The empire had departed from Rome, and its patriarch, no longer overshadowed by imperial grandeur, represented, if anyone did, the greatness and majesty of the Empire city. Leo the Great had worn the pontifical diadem, and left the patriarchate of Rome a grand position to any successor who was worthy to follow him. Such a successor was Gregory at the era now before us, a man of high political skill, of great administrative vigour, adapted above most to push to far-reaching consequences the notion of the Petrine succession, which was now rooted in Rome.

To these changes the British and Scottish Churches

had been insensible. The form in which they were now to encounter them presented itself chiefly in this guise. The Calendar had been changed, the tonsure had been varied, several ritual matters had been modified, and these things were pressed with an overbearing assumption of Petrine authority in the Roman Pontiff to which the earlier Church from which they descended had been an entire stranger. Thus regarded, the collision between the British Church and Gregory's Italian mission becomes one of great interest. It ceases to be a petty provincial squabble over an insignificant observance. It becomes one of the tide-marks of time. It is the meeting (to speak approximately) of the Christianity of the year 400 with that of 600. If the older form was vanquished, it is but a type of the advance of corruption in government, in faith, in doctrine, which under papal leadership was to affect the whole Church.

For the state of the remnant of the British Church which existed in the commencement of the seventh century we are chiefly dependent on Bede, who wrote about 130 years afterwards, partly, as he says, from tradition, and partly from writings of his predecessors in the Saxon Church.

He<sup>1</sup> gives an account of two meetings of the representatives of the British Church with Augustine. At the first of these, held at a place called 'Augustine's Oak,' the chief matter of difference was, that 'they did not keep Easter at the proper time, but from the fourteenth to the twentieth of the moon, which computation is contained in a cycle of eighty-four years.' This must not be confused with the earlier difference which prevailed in the Church of Asia as represented by Polycarp. The custom of the latter Church was to keep Easter

<sup>1</sup> Bede, *Ecc. Hist.*, ii. 91.



on the same day as the Jewish Passover, on whatever day of the week it might fall. The British usage, on the contrary, confined the celebration to Sunday, but reckoned the possible range of the day from the fourteenth to the twentieth, instead of from the sixteenth to the twenty-second, day of the paschal moon as the Roman Church had lately learned to do. Besides this, Bede adds vaguely, 'they were in the habit of doing several other things which were against the unity of the Church.' That these must have been slight ritual matters we may judge from the weight given to the difference about Easter.

There is some ground<sup>1</sup> for thinking that the difference in baptism was that the British Church did not practise the 'trine immersion,' which was insisted on by Roman usage. If so, it is curious to note that the reformed Church of England, which has made provision in its service for '*one baptism*' only, has returned to the earlier practice of the island.

The true account of the Paschal controversy has been confused by incorrect ideas of the British usage being derived from the earlier Asiatic practice. Much has been said of this as though it furnished an incidental proof of the Asiatic and non-Roman origin of the early British Church. But the fact is that the British, together with the rest of the European Churches, adopted the canon of the Council of Nicea, which confined the celebration of Easter to Sunday. During the fourth century they were all at one with the Roman and other Churches in their Easter celebration. But while the isolation of the British remnant from the rest of the Church was enforced by the Saxon invasion there had been two reforms of the Calendar. The last had

<sup>1</sup> *Haddan's Remains*, 320.

been introduced in 525 on the authority of Dionysius Exiguus, to whom the existing calculation of the Christian era is attributed.

The British Church in fact retained the Easter cycle of Sulpicius Severus drawn up about 410, before the flood of barbarian invaders isolated them from the chief Christian centres. This is only one of many proofs showing how the early British Christianity looked to Gaul for its teachers.<sup>1</sup> St. Martin, Germanus, and others were great authorities in Britain. The Gallic origin and dependence of the British Church are certain.

The real dispute was, therefore, an astronomical one. Should the lunar tables from which Easter was determined follow the older cycle of eighty-four years, or should the more recent cycle of nineteen years prevail? All were agreed that Easter should be kept on the Sunday following the Paschal full moon, but then how should that full moon be computed? This astronomical problem divided the two Churches. That the nineteen years' cycle prevailed we have all unconsciously been taught by our prayer-books from our earliest years. There the *nineteen* 'Golden numbers' still stand in array in the 'table for finding Easter Day,' where they are described as 'pointing out the day of the Paschal full moons.'<sup>2</sup>

No arrangement having been effected at the first meeting with the British representatives, a synod was subsequently held at which, Bede says, were present no

<sup>1</sup> *Haddan's Remains*, 234.

<sup>2</sup> As no space can be allotted to the investigation of Welsh history, it may be of interest to add here that the Roman computation of Easter was adopted in Wales between 755 and 809. By the conquered 'Welsh' of Somerset and Devon it was received in 731; but not by the Cornish until its conquest by Athelstane in the tenth century.—Haddan and Stubbs, i. 203; Bede, v. 18.



less than 'seven bishops of the Britons, and many most learned men, particularly from their most noble monastery Bancor [near Chester], over which the abbot Dinoth is said to have presided at that time.' Augustine proposed to this assembly as his ultimatum these three things: To conform to the Roman rule about Easter; to confirm by laying on hands after baptism according to Roman usage; and to unite with Augustine's priests in preaching to the Saxons. He promised that he would overlook other differences, the most prominent of which afterwards was the form of the tonsure.

An answer, supposed to have been given by Dinoth the British leader to Augustine, copied early in the seventeenth century by Spelman from a Welsh MS. which he deemed ancient, has often been reproduced. What its real origin may be is a doubtful matter. It runs thus: 'Be it known unto you of a certainty that we are all in obedience to the pope of Rome, and to every true and pious Christian to love each one in his own degree, and to aid him by word and deed to become a son of God. I know no other obedience than this to be due to him whom ye call the pope. And this obedience we are ever ready to pay to him and to every Christian. Besides, we are under the governance of the bishop of Caerleon upon Usk, who is under God over us to keep us in the spiritual way.' Without ability to criticise the Welsh of this document, it is not hazarding much to venture to pronounce its probable date as being subsequent to the Wycliffite writings, whose language it much resembles.

According to Bede, Dinoth suggested to the British bishops that they should take humility as the test of the true servant of Christ. Let them, therefore, observe

whether Augustine rose to receive them; if so, they might be assured of his mission. He broke down under the test. Seated in his chair he awaited their approach; his proposals were rejected, and the Welsh refused to own him as their archbishop.

We learn, at least, from this narrative that by the admission of Augustine's party, whose tradition Bede followed, there were 'many bishops and learned men,' according to the standard of that age, among the British remnant. It is clear, also, that they were free from the rapidly growing belief of the authority of the Roman Church. This is the more important inasmuch as the questions raised were not doctrinal but simply matters of discipline, over which the Western patriarch might have been supposed to possess some jurisdiction had such an authority been known to the earlier British Church.

Augustine is said to have threatened the recalcitrant British divines with the vengeance of Heaven. In Bede's judgment this was fulfilled a few years later, when the Saxons slew near Chester 1,200 monks from the Flintshire Bangor. The venerable man added this reflection of the blindest bigotry, one of the very few really offensive sentences which fell from his pen: 'that those perfidious men should feel the vengeance of temporal death also, because they had despised the offer of eternal salvation.'

Thus the Welsh Church stood on one side and looked silently on while the tides of missionary enterprise from other shores ebbed and flowed over the lands it had lost. Perhaps but little was possible to it, but of that little there is no trace. The Briton was unwilling to meet the Saxon except at the point of the spear.

The Roman mission to Canterbury claims the second

place in this eventful history. Ethelbert then reigned in Kent.<sup>1</sup> He had extended his dominion as far as the Humber; and the Saxon Chronicle says that he bore the title of Bretwalda. This must be understood as implying not much more than a supremacy or leadership over the midland Saxon tribes, in addition to his own proper sovereignty. He had married Bertha, the daughter of a king of the Franks, a Christian, who had brought with her as chaplain Liudhard, to whom Bede<sup>2</sup> gives the title of bishop. A disused British church at Canterbury, dedicated to St. Martin, is said to have been refitted for her use. It is scarcely possible to say what portions of the original edifice may yet remain in the existing Church of St. Martin. But Roman bricks are still plainly discernible in its structure, and the ancient materials have been perpetuated by subsequent Saxon and Norman architects. It is more than a surmise that it was known,<sup>3</sup> or believed, in Rome that there was a disposition towards Christianity among the English people.

The opportunity was skilfully seized by the bishop of Rome, Gregory, known justly as the Great, if personal influence and great political ability seizing critical opportunities for extending the papal authority be adopted as the measure of greatness. It would be tedious to repeat the oft-told story of the Latin puns attributed to Gregory in the Roman slave-market on seeing there some fair young English captives.

But Gregory had the intuition of a statesman as well as the zeal of a Christian bishop. Among other traces of his organising faculty, reference may be made

<sup>1</sup> Bede, *Ecc. Hist.*, b. i. c. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, b. i. c. 26.

<sup>3</sup> See letters of Gregory quoted by Kemble, *The Saxons in England*, b. ii. c. i. p. 25.



to a letter written between 590 and 595 to a presbyter proceeding to some estate of Gregory in Gaul.<sup>1</sup> He was directed to purchase out of the proceeds English youths of seventeen or eighteen years of age, to be brought up in monasteries where they might be fitted for the service of God. History repeats itself. In our own age a rescued slave has been appointed to the missionary bishopric of the Niger; and East African boys, delivered from the hands of slave-dealers and educated in India, have been sent back to the aid of their fellow-countrymen in the work of the missions on the coast from which they were originally taken.

Without dwelling on the delays and the difficulties against which Gregory struggled in the timidity of the agents employed, it is sufficient to say that in the year 596 he despatched Augustine, the head of a Roman monastery, with about forty companions, on a mission to England, where they probably landed in the year 597 in the island of Thanet. There king Ethelbert gave them an interview in the open air, fearing that under a roof he might be subjected to magic arts. Augustine advanced with whatever ecclesiastical pomp he could muster. A silver cross, and a painted picture of the Saviour, were borne in procession; and singing litanies, then usual in religious processions, the band of monks came into the presence of the king.

Whatever may have been his secret intentions, Ethelbert answered cautiously: 'Your words and promises are very fair; but as they are new to us, and of uncertain import, I cannot approve of them so far as to forsake that which I have so long followed, with the whole English nation. But, because you strangers are

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 5.

come from far into my kingdom, and, as I conceive, are desirous to impart to us those things which you believe to be true and most beneficial, we will not molest you, but rather give you favourable entertainment, and take care to supply you with necessary sustenance; nor do we forbid you to preach, and gain as many as you can to your religion.'

The king then assigned to them a residence in Canterbury. They entered that city, as before, in procession, singing and bearing their painted image and the silver cross. Thus Canterbury, the principal seat of the Kentish race, attained the proud position of the Metropolitan See of England, Augustine being soon afterwards consecrated bishop in Gaul.

The news which reaches our shores from distant parts of the world with tidings of the missionary success for which prayers are continually ascending, may make us more sensitive to a rejoicing letter from Gregory<sup>1</sup> to the bishop of Alexandria announcing the success of his efforts for Britain. Having spoken of the Christian sympathy they had felt for the state of the English, 'unbelieving and worshipping stocks and stones,' he writes of the emissary whom he had sent forth for their conversion, and proceeds: 'News has now reached me of his safety and his work. The miracles glancing forth among that people from him and his band are so great that the days of the Apostles might seem to be repeated. Last Christmas more than ten thousand English are said to have been baptised by our brother and fellow-bishop. I have sent you this news that you may know what to tell your people of Alexandria, and what you are doing in the ends of the world. For your prayers are present though in person you are not there.'

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 12.



The king and people of Kent appear to have received Christianity without much difficulty. Gregory afterwards sent some additional ecclesiastics to the aid of Augustine, together with copious instructions, which may be seen in Bede,<sup>1</sup> a strange mixture of superstition and sound common sense. He gave besides some sacred vessels, vestments, and church ornaments; also relics of apostles and martyrs, which never failed Gregory. Books moreover were sent, of which doubtful catalogues have been given from mediæval writers.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, the ominous gift of a pall is named by Bede, the token of a subjection that was to last nearly a thousand years.

In its ancient form the *pallium*, or pall, was a cloak which might be worn by any person, and had nothing official in its character. The emperor's *pallium* was naturally distinguished by splendour. To make a present of such a robe of dignity became a mark of imperial favour. As the bishops of Rome began to affect imperial prerogatives, they also adopted this mode of distinguishing persons whom they desired to honour. These at first were not necessarily of metropolitan rank.<sup>3</sup> But the gift was soon limited to that degree. As encroachments went on, it became admitted that no archbishop should be deemed to exercise full jurisdiction until he had received the pall from the reigning pope. In its later form it was reduced to the mere strip with two arms to go round the shoulders, which may to this day be seen in the armorial bearings of the see of Canterbury.

Gregory planned an organisation of the English Church which was never completed. Canterbury (or perhaps rather London) was to have twelve suffragan

<sup>1</sup> See also Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., iii. 29.

<sup>3</sup> Robertson, iv. 133.

bishops. York was to be an archiepiscopal see, with the same number of suffragans. This plan was carried out in Augustine's time only so far as the consecration of Justus to the see of Rochester, and of Mellitus to that of London. Rochester<sup>1</sup> was the capital of West Kent, with a chief or king of its own subordinate to the king of Kent. Hence the peculiarity of its ecclesiastical position. Its bishop was appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury until 1148, and he still bears the title of provincial chaplain to the Archbishop. Gregory died in the year 604 or 605, and Augustine did not long survive him. The Archbishop and many of his successors, together with kings of Kent, were laid in the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, which was built by Ethelbert.

Antiquaries have often traced local English usages to the notions and practices of our heathen forefathers. The following letter of Gregory,<sup>2</sup> written 601, to Mellitus, a member of the second mission, will tend to show how possible this may be. In a former letter Gregory had exhorted King Ethelbert to destroy the heathen temples. He now revokes this injunction, and says: 'The idolatrous fanes ought not to be thrown down. But the idols should be destroyed, the temples sprinkled with consecrated water, altars should be reared, and relics deposited. If the temples are well built, they should be turned from the worship of demons to the service of the true God. Thus the people will come to the familiar spot more readily, and be brought to the acknowledgment of God. They have been accustomed to sacrifice many oxen to the demons; some festival should turn their minds in the right direction. On the

<sup>1</sup> Kemble, *Saxons of England*, i. 148; Freeman, iv. 369.

<sup>2</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 37.

day of dedication, or the days of the martyrs whose relics are there, let them make booths round the re-dedicated temple, and celebrate the day with religious feasting. But they must slaughter the animals for food to the praise of God, and thank the Giver of all for their abundance. For it is quite impossible to cut off everything at once from hardened minds. He who would scale a lofty height must advance by steps, not by bounds.' The feasting at the village wakes, thus continued under new auspices from heathen times, has been persistent enough. Whether anything of the *religious* character which Gregory described has survived or was ever mingled with them, except in some ceremonial fashion, may well be doubted.

Laurentius succeeded Augustine at Canterbury. The precarious hold which Christianity had yet obtained is manifested by the following strange story.

Heathen princes succeeded to power in these newly formed dioceses. Mellitus and Justus felt themselves obliged to retire into Gaul. Laurentius<sup>1</sup> was preparing to follow, when in the dead of night the blessed Prince of the Apostles appeared to him, and sharply scourging him a long time, asked of him, with apostolical severity, 'Why he would forsake the flock which he had himself committed to him; or, when he deserted them, to what shepherds he would commit Christ's sheep that were in the midst of wolves?' The next morning Laurentius showed to the king his lacerated back, and described his supernatural chastisement. The astonished monarch, terrified at such apostolical vigour, abjured heathenism and invited back the exiled bishops. Justus returned to Rochester; but London refused to receive Mellitus,

<sup>1</sup> Bede, ii. vi.



who soon afterwards, on the death of Laurentius, became the third Archbishop of Canterbury.

It would be more agreeable to pass over these more discreditable passages in the mediæval history. But trickery is too manifestly stamped on the artifices by which the men of those ages obtained influence over the minds of the simple barbarians amongst whom their work lay. The Church was rapidly learning those arts of deception which in succeeding centuries ripened into the gigantic frauds of the forged decretals and other documents which have upborne the greatest historical falsehood the world has seen, the fabric of Papal power.

Mellitus also died in 624, and was succeeded by Justus, bishop of Rochester, who in due time received the pall from Rome. Under the auspices of Justus, Christianity no longer owned the Thames as its boundary, but made a considerable advance into the northern regions of England. Paulinus, who had accompanied Mellitus and Justus on the second mission sent out by Gregory to strengthen the hands of Augustine, was consecrated bishop by Justus, and was attached as chaplain to a Kentish princess on her marriage to Edwin, king of Northumbria. Thus as it had been in Kent so now in Northumbria, a Christian queen was the means of opening the door for the faith. Edwin is described<sup>1</sup> as 'a man of extraordinary sagacity, who often sat by himself a long time, silent with his tongue, but deliberating in his heart how he should proceed, and to which religion he should adhere.' Influence of various kinds was brought to bear upon king Edwin before his indecision was ended. The pope, Boniface V., wrote letters to him exhorting him to abandon his idolatry, and to

<sup>1</sup> Bede, ii. 9.



his queen, entreating her not to relax her earnest endeavour to move her husband. To both he sent presents, adapted no doubt, as a Roman might think, to the simple barbarians. To Edwin he said<sup>1</sup>: ‘We have sent you the blessing of your protector, the blessed Peter, prince of the Apostles, that is a shirt with one gold ornament, and one garment of Ancyra.’ To the queen, in like terms, he sent ‘a silver looking-glass and a gilt ivory comb.’ Still, Paulinus found Edwin immovable. He, therefore, brought to bear upon him the artifices of superstition. By some means, probably through the queen, though Bede simply supposes it may have been through vision, he became acquainted with a secret of the king’s former life. Edwin in his youth was in exile and imminent danger. As he was brooding over his misfortunes at dead of night, a stranger came up to him and asked him why he sat alone there melancholy and watchful. After some parlance, the stranger foretold deliverance on condition of a promise of entire submission to wholesome counsels. ‘Having received this answer, the person that talked with him laid his right hand upon his head, saying: “When this sign shall happen, remember this present occurrence and the discourse that has passed between us, and do not delay the performance of what you now promise.” Having uttered these words, he is said to have immediately vanished.’ Edwin speedily escaped the perils which surrounded him, recovered his dominions, and became the most powerful sovereign in the north of England.

Paulinus himself may have been the mysterious stranger; but by whatever means he had learned this story it was skilfully used. Coming up to the king, ‘he laid his right hand on his head, and asked whether he

<sup>1</sup> Bede, ii. 10.

knew that sign? The king, trembling, was ready to fall down at his feet, but he raised him up,' and bade him fulfil his promise. The account of the council which Edwin called to deliberate on this demand is one of the most interesting and picturesque of those which Bede's pages record.

Coifi, the Saxon chief priest, is said to have declared that their own religion was profitless. For that he himself, the most diligent in the worship of their deities, had received few benefits, while others less devout were in higher favour with the king and more prosperous in all things. He was, therefore, of opinion that if the Christian doctrines should prove better and stronger, they ought to be accepted. This peculiarly personal and worldly line of reasoning stands, however, in contrast with the higher strain of another chieftain. 'When I compare the life of man on earth with the uncertain future, it seems to me like a familiar occurrence at a winter feast. The hearth is glowing in the middle of the hall, which is warm with good cheer. The tempest of rain or snow is howling without; and thou, O king, art seated with thy chiefs and officers. Then flits a sparrow rapidly through the hall. At one door it enters, at the other it departs. For the moment it is sheltered from the wintry storm, but after the brief space of tranquillity, returning from the winter it had left to the winter again, it passes away from sight. So appears for short space this life of man; but what follows it, or what went before it, we know not. Wherefore, if this new doctrine brings anything more it deserves to be followed.' Other chiefs spoke in a similar strain, and Coifi asked for more information. The result was that Coifi himself, lance in hand and mounted on horseback—both forbidden to the Saxon

priest—led the way to the destruction of the idols, in a spot near York identified by Bede's description.

Edwin, 'with all the nobility of his nation and a very large number of the common sort, received the faith, and the washing of holy regeneration in the year of the incarnation of our Lord 627.' Thus Paulinus became the first prelate of the illustrious see of York; and the site of its glorious minster was consecrated by the erection of such a church as Saxon art was able to rear.

North Lincolnshire, or Lindsey, was at this time subject to Northumbria and received Christianity from the preaching of Paulinus. It is manifest that a rude and uneducated people converted so suddenly, may have brought with them a considerable amount of simple credence, and even excited earnestness; but their knowledge of their new faith must have been slight indeed. Bede relates as an anecdote communicated to him by one who had heard it from an aged man, that the latter remembered having been himself baptised at noon day by the bishop Paulinus, in the presence of king Edwin, with a great multitude of the people, in the river Trent. He described Paulinus as being 'tall of stature, a little stooping, his hair black, his visage meagre, his nose very slender and aquiline, his aspect both venerable and majestic.' Evidently the dignified Italian ecclesiastic was distinguished among the fair burly Saxons. Meantime archbischöp Justus died, and was succeeded by Honorius, the fifth archbishop of Canterbury. To him and to Paulinus the pope (also named Honorius) sent the pall in the year 634.

Edwin fell in battle in 633, and Northumbria was overwhelmed with frightful massacres by a confederation of the heathen Mercians and the Christian Britons. Paulinus fled, with some of the royal family and trea-



tures, into Kent, where he died as bishop of Rochester. Thus ended the triumphant progress of the Roman mission of Augustine. The feeble remnant of Christianity in the north was ministered to by James, a deacon.

Honorius, the archbishop, died in 653. In his days the first Englishman was raised to the episcopate: Ithamar of Rochester, 'equal in life and learning to his predecessors.' Honorius was the last of the Italian band who had accompanied Augustine. Five of them in succession had occupied the Metropolitan See. None of them had developed any considerable power, and those who read their lives at greater detail will acknowledge that little of interest can be added to this rapid sketch. Their remains lay side by side in the north porch of the Church of Augustine.<sup>1</sup> Honorius, fifty years before, had followed the silver cross when Augustine entered Canterbury, and when he was laid among his predecessors, this first epoch of the Italian mission closed in darkness and discouragement.

We must turn now to a race of greater vigour than these soft Italians, and trace a mission from the north which succeeded where they had failed.

A few years after the death of Edwin, the kingdom of Northumbria revived under Oswald, who belonged to the family superseded by Edwin, during whose reign they had found shelter in Scotland. There, says Bede, 'they were catechised according to the doctrine of the Scots, and regenerated by the grace of baptism.' As soon as Oswald was established in his dominion, his thoughts turned naturally not to the fugitive bishop Paulinus, but <sup>2</sup> 'to the elders of the Scots, desiring they would send him a bishop.' In answer to this appeal, the Columban brotherhood in Iona sent one of

<sup>1</sup> Thorn, *Chron. Abb. S. Aug. Cant.*, i. 11.    <sup>2</sup> Bede, iii. 3.



their number, the Apostolical Aidan, into England. Bede describes him as 'a man of singular meekness, piety, and moderation; zealous in the cause of God, though not altogether according to knowledge. For he was wont to keep Easter Sunday according to the custom of his country, which we have before so often mentioned.'

Aidan found on the coast of Northumberland an islet which he deemed might be to England the counterpart of Iona. Lindisfarne, or the Holy Island, is about a mile and a half distant from the mainland, with which indeed it is connected at low water. It is somewhat smaller than Iona, being about two miles and a quarter in length and something more than a mile in breadth. Lindisfarne, like Iona, was repeatedly ravaged by the Northmen, and here also the existing ruins belong to the more stately monastery founded after the Norman Conquest.

In this island Aidan planted a settlement of the Scottish character. Its humble thatched huts were grouped round the oratory, and a band of Iona brethren reproduced on English ground their accustomed life and labours under an unchanged mode of government. It was not after the more lordly pattern of the episcopacy known to Bede, but he can scarcely conceal his admiration of it.

'Aidan,'<sup>1</sup> says he, 'who was the first bishop of the place, was a monk, and was always wont to lead a monastic life with all his people. Hence after him all the bishops of that place until this day exercise the episcopal functions in such sort, that while the abbot, who is chosen by the bishop with the consent of the brethren, governs the monastery, all the priests, deacons,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of St. Cuthbert*, xvi.

and the other orders observe in all things the monastic rule with the bishop himself.'

Thus it came to pass that the see of York and the Church of Paulinus still lay desolate, and were not restored until Wilfrid renewed the hierarchical system of the Continent. From Lindisfarne Northumbria received the Gospel. King Oswald himself acted as interpreter. 'It was most delightful,' says Bede, repeating the story of events which older monks of Jarrow might almost remember in his younger days, 'to see the king himself interpreting the Word of God to his commanders and ministers, for he had perfectly learned the language of the Scots during his long banishment. From that time many from the region of the Scots came daily into Britain, and with great devotion preached the word of faith to those provinces of the English over which king Oswald reigned. Churches were built in divers places; the people joyfully flocked together to hear the Word; possessions and lands were given of the king's bounty to build monasteries; the younger English were by their Scottish masters instructed; and greater care and attention were bestowed upon the rules and observance of regular discipline.' Thus spread Scottish Christianity with its characteristic monastic type through Northumbria.

After a life of great Christian activity, Aidan died, and was buried in the Holy Island. He was succeeded, 652, by Finan, another of the Iona brethren. Bede eulogises his Christian character and diligence; but bestows a chapter on the expression of regret for his irregularity in the matter of the Paschal Calendar.

In those days the great central kingdom of Mercia, under the fierce heathen king Penda, was the chief obstacle to the conversion of England. It was Penda,

in confederacy with Britons, who slew Edwin in battle, and overthrew the mission of Paulinus 633. Penda in 642 again ravaged Northumbria, and the saintly Oswald fell in battle. But Northumbria revived under Oswy, and as the Mercian king grew old, his son Peada married the daughter of king Oswy, and Mercia ceased its virulent opposition to the Gospel. Oswy made it a condition of the marriage that Peada should be baptised.<sup>1</sup> He 'heard the preaching of the truth, the promise of the heavenly kingdom, the hope of the resurrection and immortality.' 'I will be a Christian,' he replied, 'though the maiden be denied me.' 'Accordingly he was baptised by bishop Finan, with his nobles and soldiers and servants, and returned with four priests, one of them the illustrious Cedd. Thus Mercia received the faith from the Scottish mission. Penda fell in battle a heathen to the last; but he had withdrawn his opposition to the Gospel, despising only, as Bede characteristically adds, those who had received the faith but failed to obey it. 'Contemptible wretches were they,' said the old heathen, 'who would not obey the God in whom they believed.'

The influence of king Oswy of Northumbria spread, after Penda's death, over the larger part of England. Now it is that we find Christianity reintroduced among the East Saxons for the first time since the flight of Mellitus. About 654, Cedd received the episcopate and was sent amongst that people on the invitation of their king, a friend of Oswy, who had received baptism, like Peada, at the hands of Bishop Finan. Cedd did not perhaps succeed very well in establishing the Scottish discipline on the Thames. 'He collected,' says Bede, 'the servants of Christ's household, and taught them to

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iii. 21.



observe the discipline of regular life, as far as those rude people were then capable.' .

The neighbours of the East Saxons, the East Angles of Suffolk and Norfolk, had earlier received the Gospel, and from a different source. Sigebert, an East Anglian king, had been driven into exile, and in Gaul had embraced Christianity. On the return of this king, Felix, a Burgundian, a man of missionary spirit, offered himself for Christ's service. Sigebert placed him as bishop of East Anglia in 631 at Dunwich, a place now under the waves of the German Ocean, on the coast of Suffolk, but the seat of that episcopacy until the time of the Conquest. Felix still retains some hold on East Anglian memory, in the town of Felixstow on that sandy coast. This mission, it will be seen, had so far no connection with the Scottish movement which it preceded. It was from Honorius, archbishop of Canterbury, that Felix received commission. But at the same time Irish influence penetrated there also. Fursey, an Irish monk of legendary fame, founded a monastery in East Anglia, and is said to have wrought great results by preaching and example.

For the conversion of Wessex we are also to look a little backward, and neither to Canterbury, nor (directly at least) to Northumbria. Birinus, a man of uncertain origin, offered himself to Pope Honorius for missionary service amongst the English. Landing in Wessex, about 634, he found the people utter pagans, and concluded that his work lay there. He gained access to the king, where again Northumbrian influence meets us. Oswald,<sup>1</sup> 'the most holy and victorious king of the Northumbrians,' was sponsor to the Wessex king, receiving him as he came forth from the font, and then taking his

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iii. 7.



daughter to wife, became his son-in-law. Thus Wessex received Christianity ; and Dorchester, now only a small country place near Oxford, became the seat of its bishop until Winchester and Lincoln in succession robbed it of its honours.

Such is a brief sketch of the progress of Christianity in England. Those who would search more narrowly into its ebbs and flows, and who would, therefore, learn a more tender patience in dealing with converted heathen of modern times, would have to recount sad stories of lapses, and bloodshed, and revivals of heathenism, met by renewed and devoted labours. To enter into these details a general narrative will not serve. They have been most exactly recounted by Professor Bright, in his ' Chapters on Early English Church History.'

Bede tells us that whilst Aidan lived the dispute about Easter between the Scottish and Roman parties slept, so great was the veneration in which he was held by both. His successor, Finan, had to bear more of the brunt of controversy, but remained firm to the Scottish discipline. Colman, another of the Iona brotherhood, succeeded Finan about 661, and then the dispute came to a climax. King Oswy himself held the Scottish usage, but his wife had been brought up in Kent and had a Kentish chaplain. His son also had been instructed by Wilfrid, an ecclesiastic who had been in Rome. Thus the Roman usage found advocates in the royal family ; and the minds of the people being much disturbed on this question, a council was held at Whitby<sup>1</sup> to decide it. The discussion was long, and was treated by the heated divines as if the truth of the Gospel and the salvation of souls depended on the

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iii. 25.

decision. Wilfrid, who was the chief Roman champion, at last brought the question to the asserted practice of St. Peter, and his authority as the Apostle to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven had been given. At this point king Oswy broke in with the enquiry, whether both parties allowed that to be true. Learning that they did, he spoke thus: 'I say unto you that he is that door-keeper whom I will not contradict, but, as far as I know and am able, I desire in all things to obey his decrees; lest when I come to the gates of the kingdom of heaven, there should be none to open them, he being my adversary who is admitted to have the keys.' The cause being thus lost, Colman with some others withdrew into Scotland. Chad, and the other Scottish ecclesiastics remaining in England, accepted the decision. Chad, in particular, submitted to reconsecration at the hands of Archbishop Theodore, and was removed from the see of York to that of Lichfield, with which his memory is indelibly associated.<sup>1</sup>

But the defeated Calendar and heretical tonsure did not linger very long, even in their northern home. The abbot of Jarrow<sup>2</sup> wrote an elaborate epistle to the Pictish king urging upon him the Roman usage, and the monks of Iona themselves conformed<sup>3</sup> to it in the year 716, though not without a troublesome schism. Doubtless there is an ecclesiastical and social convenience, possibly also some higher consequent advantage, in being freed from trifles which tend to separate and prevent good men from active cooperation. But having regard to the manner and objects with which this controversy had been pressed and this submission made, there were omens of evil to come. It is scarcely possible to read the arguments and observe the warmth of the

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, v. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Skene, *Celt. Scot.*, ii. 278, 288.

aggressive party without remembering the Apostle's words<sup>1</sup>: 'Ye observe days and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you.' 'Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.'

We may here pause to review the state of England after the Council of Whitby, when the amalgamation of the two sections of the Church of England was resolved upon by the leading Saxon kings.

It is manifest that the chief measure of missionary success is to be ascribed to the Scottish mission. The Italian work had in great measure collapsed, except in Kent, which retained its allegiance. In all the rest of the island the northern energy is more or less distinctly traceable. Northumbria and Mercia were evangelised, and London, with Essex, recovered by the mission from Iona. East Anglia and Wessex owed much to the same source.

It may be asked whether any distinctive peculiarities may be noticed in the two rival missions. It seems certain that some may be traced. The very mode of conducting the ritual controversy, already noticed, shows a difference, and is indicated in Bede's narrative. At first sight one rigid bigotry seems arrayed against another. But close observation may satisfy us that the English instinct is not altogether false. Celtic Christianity to a great degree felt itself struggling for liberty, while Rome was aiming at domination. It is tolerably clear from Bede's account of Augustine's negotiations with the British bishops,<sup>2</sup> that they resented the haughtiness and rejected the dictation of the foreigner, far more than they cherished their own custom. In the Council of Whitby, in which the Celtic computation of

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 10; Col. ii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Page 37.



Easter was rejected, Bede<sup>1</sup> says, that many had begun to 'fear, lest, having received the name of Christians, they might happen to run or to have run in vain.' This shows that the Roman party pressed their Calendar as involving something vital to salvation. Wilfrid, also, when speaking at that council, after allowing for the 'rustic simplicity but pious intentions' of Columba and others, declared that henceforth they would 'certainly sin if having heard the decrees of the apostolic see, yea rather of the universal Church, and that the same are confirmed by Holy Writ, they refused to follow them.' Colman and his friends were content to stand simply on their full liberty to follow the usage of their predecessors, holy men and true. We may recognise here, in brief, the ever-lost battle of the Middle Ages—the Papacy step by step quenching the liberty of the national Churches.

Another very marked distinction, which will enlist the sympathy of the English churchman, is the love for Holy Scripture conspicuous in all the Columban brotherhood of Iona, contrasted with the ritual formalism of the Roman mission. This receives illustration from the singular account<sup>2</sup> given of Columba leaving Ireland for Iona. Columba had copied St. Finnian's manuscript of the Psalms. A question arose as to the ownership of the copy. The Irish king decided, that 'as to every cow belongs its calf, so to every book belongs its son-book' (or copy). From this (as one of the stories has it), the feud arose which led to Columba settling in Iona. The study of Holy Scripture thus manifested continued to distinguish his brotherhood. Bede, when apologising for their Easter irregularity on account of 'their being so far from the rest of the world,' adds,

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Reeves' *Adamnan*, 249.



‘wherefore they only diligently practised such works of piety and charity as they could learn from the prophetical, evangelical, and apostolical writings.’ When Bede is describing the life of Segeni, the abbot of Iona, who sent forth Aidan, he says: ‘His course of life was so different from the slothfulness of our times, that all those who bore him company, whether they were shorn monks or laymen, were employed in meditation, that is, either in reading the Scriptures or learning the Psalms.’

When Aidan was first sent out on his mission it was in consequence of his admonishing<sup>1</sup> a brother of harsher temperament, that the people ought to be ‘by degrees nourished with the Word of God;’ and, as far as we can dimly discern through Bede’s love of marvels, the Word of God was the guide of these early Scottish ecclesiastics as far as they were instructed in it.

It is not necessary to repeat what has been said of the loose ecclesiastical organisation of the Scoto-Irish Church, but for good or for evil it presents marked characteristics.

Our review of this period would be very incomplete and inadequate if we omitted more distinct notice of the miraculous incidents grouped around us at every step taken under the guidance of Bede. They are related with a childlike simplicity and confidence most refreshing and attractive. They are not thrust into the narrative, but are inwoven into its fabric with an ease which is simply the expression of the guileless faith of an artless man. It is not easy to judge by the same indulgent standard the more deliberate and subtle Italian intellects of Gregory’s emissaries. The blind man restored by Augustine, the scourged back of Laurentius,

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iii. 5.

the vision of Edwin utilised by Paulinus, raise unpleasant surmises. But the marvels of Saxon saintly life read more like the dreams and fancies of childhood than the calculations of the priestly intellect. The good king Oswald was the hero of the Christian faith in Northumbria. Where he hastily reared a cross before one of his great victories the Saxons fondly believed sick men to be healed ; and where he fell in battle the very dirt of the earth mingled with water became a healing potion. Nay, a tired horse rolling on the sacred spot rose refreshed, and some of the earth tied up in a cloth preserved the post of the house on which it hung in the midst of a conflagration. In the tent where Aidan died there was a post against which the expiring saint reclined. The post escaped twice afterwards when the building of which it was part was burned. Manifestly the post was a sacred thing, and its chips placed in water were found to possess healing power. Such were the stories which Bede learned by the monastery fire from wondering Saxons. We readily give our indulgence to the simplicity of the man, wise and learned beyond his times, but childlike in a credence, which had never been shaken into harsh suspicions. Nothing need check such indulgence save the reflections which knowledge of mankind and of history must bring. The simplicity of the saint becomes the superstition of the ignorant and the unenlightened. Superstition clouds the fair face of the truth of God, and darkens the Gospel ; and so step by step man departs from the simplicity of the revealed word, and becomes a slave to his own foolish imaginations.

One additional remark may be made in closing this chapter. It has often been urged that the true history of Christianity in England tends to reduce its Roman

origin to a very narrow compass. The British Church which survived at the end of the sixth century in the west of the island, and the Celtic Christianity of Scotland which spread so rapidly southward, owed nothing to Rome as far as authentic history can acknowledge. The Christianising work of the Roman mission has been shown to have been very limited in its effective results.

But that which still more effectually marks off the English Church from the Roman system is the absolute freshness of its origination. The imperial Christianity of Constantine and his successors was obliterated. No bishop of London or York remained to carry on the imperial traditions and all the secularised usages of the prelates of the empire. The civil law with all the state-officialism was gone. The Saxon bishops were for the most part seated in country settlements, avoiding even such cities as had survived the general desolation. Their jurisdiction, though it might borrow much from continental customs, was derived from the practice of ancient Germanic freedom. They sat<sup>1</sup> with the chiefs and wise men of the tribe, and exercised an authority jointly with the secular officials which, perhaps, was never very clearly defined, and which now evades exact determination. As the claims of Rome were advanced century after century, so did the English Church, like its continental compeers, yield gradually something of its freedom. But it will be for the history of the Norman centuries to unfold how the papal and the civil law threw their enslaving bonds around the liberty of the Church of England, and reduced its archbishop to the rank of a papal delegate.

It will be shown hereafter how the Norman noble

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Constit. Hist.*, i. 232.



learned to identify himself with the English people, and how under his leadership the civil law of the empire was rejected by the vigour of early parliaments, and the common law, the inheritance of Saxon freedom, maintained in its supremacy. Scientific arrangement and accuracy of definition may have been thus lost to our legal systems, but the precious heritage of liberty has survived. We have been taught in civil matters to trace the continuity of our government, our laws, our history, our local usages, to those whom for convenience we call Saxons, but who were proud to call themselves as we do, 'the English folk.' Strange it is that any should wish to link their church life with that imperialised interval which broke in upon our national Church from the eleventh to the sixteenth century! Strange that the bishop and synod of the canon and the civil law of the papalised mediæval period, or of the imperial tyranny of Constantinople, should be the model for study and imitation, rather than the bishop of that free English race whose civil traditions we inherit, whose words are still our words, whose episcopate we have received! That imperial system, that separated ecclesiastical order have, alas! in no small degree been the cause of divisions that perhaps may never be closed. The institutions of one age may not precisely in detail suit the changed circumstances of another age. But the nature of a mighty race is ineradicable, and principles endure. If the ecclesiastical system of England is ever again to be national in any sense that may be indisputable, the lines upon which it must work must be traced, not in the papalised system which severed the haughty ecclesiastic of the fourteenth or fifteenth century from his fellow-men, but in the Saxon, or more accurately, the English, association of Church and



State—sovereign, bishop, and people—deciding on their common interests. Let the true love of antiquity temper false ecclesiastical pride; then will the English Church recur to its origin, and English principles rule in the Church as they do in the State.

## CHAPTER III.

THE ORGANISATION AND LEARNING OF THE EARLY  
ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

THE very name Anglo-Saxon is objected to, and in some sense rightly, by some of our leading historians. They urge that the term is misleading, as though the people whom we thus style were not our bone and our flesh. Did they not, it is asked, call themselves the English people? Are not we, by inheritance of race, of customs, and of language, the same and not another nation? All this may be true, and yet the prevalence of the name may imply a certain convenience in its use. And surely in speaking of the Church of England after the Conquest, we find it separated from the Church before the Conquest by sufficiently conspicuous distinctions. It is, therefore, at least a matter of convenience and clearness to retain a nomenclature which marks off a defined period of history.

The present chapter will deal with the principal events in the history of the early Saxon-Church during the century and a-half which followed its missionary stage of existence. During that time it passed from the first fervour of conversion, and the first excitement of the novelties of before unexplored knowledge, into coldness, laxity, and indifference. There will be found here no complete chronicle of events, but a summary account only of the leading circumstances and personages, from the missionary epoch of the Church until the approx-

imate union of the Saxon tribes under Egbert early in the ninth century.

After the death of Honorius, the last of the early Italian archbishops of Canterbury, a West Saxon, named Frithona, who assumed the appellation Deusdedit, was appointed to the Metropolitan See, 655. He died in 664, the date usually assigned to the Council at Whitby, which united the Church of England. The appointment of his successor became at this crisis a matter of great importance. It was needful that the new archbishop should be a man who would conciliate both parties. The kings of Kent and Northumbria thought they had found such a person in Wighard, a Kentish priest of English extraction. In order to give the greater weight to his office, he was sent to Italy to receive consecration at the hands of Vitalian, then bishop of Rome. There he died of the plague, and to avoid further delay the two kings left the choice of the new Archbishop to Vitalian. Thus, by the hand of its two leading sovereigns was the Church of England sent forth on the orbit in which for many centuries it was to revolve as a satellite of the Roman See. What might have been its better fortune, or into what worse heresies it might have fallen, had the decision at Whitby been different, it is vain to speculate. It was henceforth to share the common lot of Western Christendom until the day of Reformation should arise. The other island Churches, of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, followed it in this submission, but at later and at different periods.

The appointment to Canterbury having been thus left to Vitalian, he replied at some length to Oswy king of Northumbria, congratulating him on his piety and his orthodoxy about Easter, and implying that there was some difficulty in finding a suitable person. 'We

have not been able,' said Vitalian,<sup>1</sup> 'considering the length of the journey, to find at present a man docile, and qualified in all respects to be a bishop, according to the tenor of your letters. But as soon as such a suitable person shall be found, we will send him with proper instructions to your country, that he may, by word of mouth, and through the divine oracles, with the assistance of God, root out all the enemy's tares throughout your island.'

Vitalian, accordingly, commenced enquiries which ultimately led him to select two ecclesiastics, of whom we have this description. Hadrian was an abbot near Naples,<sup>2</sup> 'by nation an African, well versed in holy writ, experienced in monastical and ecclesiastical discipline, and excellently skilled both in the Greek and Latin tongues.' Theodore was a monk then in Rome, 'born at Tarsus in Cilicia, a man well instructed in worldly and divine literature, as also in Greek and Latin; of known probity of life, and venerable for age, being sixty-six years old.' Hadrian having refused the archbishopric himself, prevailed on Vitalian to consecrate Theodore. This was done, but on condition that Hadrian should accompany him into Britain. We are expressly told that this arrangement was made because of some distrust lest Theodore might, 'according to the custom of the Greeks,' introduce anything contrary to true faith into the Church over which he presided. Hadrian, as an African, would look to the Western rather than the Eastern Church, and so might be trusted as a watchful guardian by the side of Theodore. But, alas! the archbishop's exterior was not utterly orthodox, he wore the Eastern tonsure, and had to wait four

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, iv. 1.



months before his hair had grown sufficiently to receive the true Petrine crown.

The orthodox Roman tonsure is that which is familiar to us in mediæval paintings. The crown only of the head is shaved, leaving a ring of hair untouched. This, like everything else at Rome, was assumed to be due to the Apostle Peter himself, and was known as Petrine. The much-detested Scottish tonsure,<sup>1</sup> on the other hand, shaved the head in front from ear to ear, leaving no unbroken ring of hair. If this did not come from St. Peter, to whom could it be traced? The 'Clementines,' and 'Recognitions,' the first religious novel, told the curious story of the long contest between St. Peter and Simon Magus, which was generally received as history. Hence anything which was not of Peter might be taken as due to Simon Magus. Accordingly, the Roman party delighted in twitting their Celtic opponents with following that famous heresiarch, and wearing what they were pleased to call his tonsure on their heads. The defect of Theodore was of a different kind. His was not the obnoxious horseshoe of hair. He had the tonsure of St. Paul, who was traditionally reported to have been quite bald. Accordingly the Pauline tonsure shaved or clipped the whole of the head. In this bared condition it required these four months' growth before Theodore's hair had recovered sufficiently to receive the Roman form of tonsure. Then he proceeded with Hadrian into Britain, where he arrived 669. This arrival of the learned Greek with his companion is an era in the history of the Church of England.

His coadjutor, Hadrian, was made abbot of the monastery which Augustine founded, and where all the early archbishops were buried. Theodore made a visi-

<sup>1</sup> Reeve, *Adamnan*, p. 350; Skene, *Celt. Scot.*, ii. 6.

tation of the English portion of the whole island, and to use the words of Bede,<sup>1</sup> 'being everywhere attended and assisted by Hadrian, he disseminated the right rule of life, and the canonical custom of celebrating Easter. This was the first archbishop whom all the English Church obeyed. And forasmuch as they were well-read in sacred and secular literature, they gathered a crowd of disciples. Day by day flowed from them rivers of knowledge to water the hearts of the hearers; and together with the books of holy writ, they taught the arts of poetry, astronomy, and ecclesiastical arithmetic. In testimony of this, some of their scholars are living at this day as well versed in the Greek and Latin tongues as in their own. From that time also they began in all the churches of the English to learn ecclesiastical music, which till then had been only known in Kent. Thus, Theodore visiting all parts, ordained bishops in proper places, and with their assistance corrected such things as he found faulty.'

The Church of England, as it was left at the death of Theodore, was subject to the jurisdiction of sixteen<sup>2</sup> bishops under the sole primacy of Canterbury. It was some few years afterwards that Northumbria claimed Metropolitan rank for its chief bishop, and the imperial city of York became the see of an archbishop.

The first synod of the English Church was assembled by Theodore at Hertford 673. Six<sup>3</sup> sees were represented. Theodore is said to have presented to this council a book of 'canons of the holy fathers,' doubtless those then of authority in Rome. From this he selected ten canons regulating certain matters of discipline and jurisdiction, which all present subscribed.

It need scarcely be said that the first of these was :

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Stubbs, *Constit. Hist.*, i. 219.

<sup>3</sup> Bede, iv. 5.

‘We will all keep the holy day of Easter on the Sunday after the fourteenth moon (that is, day of the moon) of the first month.’ The object of the rest may be described as limiting the jurisdiction and action of the bishops and clergy within their own districts. It was further agreed that a synod should be held twice a year; the August meeting to be held at Cloveshoo. The situation of this place has been a puzzle to antiquarians for centuries. It would be futile to enumerate the guesses which have been ventured as to its locality. All that seems fairly certain is, that it must have been within the dominions of the Mercian<sup>1</sup> king, but also not far from Kent and Wessex. These conditions may point to some place not far from London, which receives support from the fact that Boniface calls the English synod ‘Synodus Londinensis.’ It is somewhat strange that after so precise a canon there should be no record of another synod at Cloveshoo till seventy years later.

Another synod held by Theodore met at Hatfield 680. Its notice of the Monothelite controversy then active at Constantinople, and its acknowledgment of the first five general councils, shows England as once more entering the European family of nations.

Following the laws of Justinian, Theodore is said to have granted the patronage of churches to any landed proprietor who should endow them on his estate. It has been alleged that hence in the course of time the territorial divisions, called parishes, were constituted. But this subject will require further consideration when the constitution of the Saxon Church comes under review.

It is but a sketch in outline of this eminent archbishop which can be presented here; but even so, it would

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 122; Kemble, ii. 191.



be incomplete without some account of the Penitential which bears his name. Gieseler<sup>1</sup> gives this curt description of this class of literature: 'Instructions how to purchase penitential seasons by singing, by prayer, and by money.'

After the conversion of Constantine it was thought wise to adapt the ancient severe moral discipline of the Church to the world which ostensibly avowed its allegiance. Then it became only too feasible, and apparently necessary, to commute the probation of wealthy and noble sinners for some pecuniary or other service which they might be more willing to render. Hence arose, especially in the Greek Church, the system which has received such a condemnatory description.

Amongst such a people as the Saxons a system of this kind was as natural as it was pernicious. The Saxon code valued almost every offence at a certain pecuniary mulct.<sup>2</sup> Offences against the life, honour, or property of every man were estimated in money on a scale proportioned to his rank. It was difficult for such a people to learn that the judgment of God proceeded on a different system altogether; and the penitential books failed to teach them that fundamental truth. The following specimen of this singular ecclesiastical arithmetic may suffice to justify Gieseler's pithy definition. It is assigned by the learned collector to Archbishop Dunstan and the year 963. It applies to 'infirm men.'

'One<sup>3</sup> day's fasting may be redeemed with a penny, or with two hundred psalms. A year's fasting may be redeemed with thirty shillings, or with freeing a slave that is worth that money. A man for one day's fasting

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ii. p. 195, Clark's transl.

<sup>2</sup> Kemble, b. ii. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, *Laws and Canons of the Church of England*, pp. 426-449, Oxford ed.



may sing *Beati* six times, and six times *Pater noster*. . . . With one mass twelve days' fasting may be redeemed ; and with ten masses four months' fasting may be redeemed. . . .' Then follow further commutations for rich men, among them : ' Let him by all possible means procure seven times a hundred and twenty men to fast for him three days, then are there as many fasts kept as there are days in seven years. . . . '

' This is that softening of penance which belongs to wealthy men, and such as abound in friends ; but one in a lower condition cannot make such dispatch ; but, therefore, he must pursue it in his own person with the greater earnestness. And it is most righteous that every one revenge his own crimes on himself by diligent satisfaction ; for it is written, every one shall bear his own burden.'

The comment of a distinguished scholar and antiquarian may possibly have greater weight with some than that of a divine. Kemble<sup>1</sup> indignantly remarks on this system : ' Nothing can more strikingly demonstrate the folly and wickedness of squaring and shaping the unlimited mercy of God by the rule and measure of human intelligence. I am bound to say that I know of no more fatal source of anti-Christian error, no more miserable records of the debasement and degradation of human intellect, no more frightful proof of the absence of genuine religion.'

But, however true this may be with regard to the commuted penance which grew up in the Saxon as in other branches of the Church, it is right to say that the genuine Penitential of Theodore,<sup>2</sup> as far as it remains from the collection of his disciples, is not open to this precise condemnation. It is in fact a complete

<sup>1</sup> *Saxons in England*, ii. 404.

<sup>2</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 173.

code of ecclesiastical discipline, divided methodically under the heads relating to such states of life and such sins as might come under cognisance of the Church authorities. For example, under the first heading, 'Of Drunkenness,' a man in holy orders guilty of this must either abandon the crime or be deposed. A drunken monk must be a penitent for thirty days, a priest for forty, and so on with other gradations. In this manner the season of penitence is marked out for the great variety of human offences, each under its proper division. It ranges upward from a flogging to be inflicted on a boy, or the penitence of a few days, to the usual maximum of fifteen years. The remark obvious to the English churchman, knowing nothing of such a system as this, would perhaps be to this effect. Some stringent discipline of the kind may be necessary in a Church freshly gathered from among the heathen, and surrounded by the abominations of heathen immorality. That it is so the experience and practice of our Indian missions abundantly proves. In these a convert lapsing into open sin is relegated for such time as may be needful into the rank of what the early Church called 'penitents,' that is, persons under a renewed probation suspended from their full church privileges. It seems manifest that something of this kind may have been even more necessary in that early Saxon Church, where, without conversion of heart, and with the most slender knowledge, thousands were baptised at once.

But when this obvious necessity is fossilised into a system—when the test of a sinner's restoration into full church communion is not 'the godly sorrow working repentance unto salvation,' which the Apostle<sup>1</sup> required in the first case upon record, but the serving out a

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 4-11, vii. 8-13.

fixed penal period of so many days or years, the spiritual element is lost, and all becomes human, ecclesiastical, and formal.

It appears, therefore, that the genuine Penitential of Theodore does not recognise commutations and evasions of the fixed penitential periods. For some time afterwards these were deemed irregular. The synod of Cloveshoo in 747, under the second archbishop after Theodore, expressly decreed<sup>1</sup> that no alms should be allowed to diminish the fixed period of penance; that however good it might be to repeat the psalms, to pray often, to bestow alms, yet that the assigned duration of the penitential time must not be shortened on their account. Otherwise, the synod shrewdly argues, it could not have been a hard thing for the rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, if alms could purchase impunity. Still the fact that the synod notices the subject shows that the practice had already crept in. Nay, it appears to have been already formulated, for current 'penitentials of uncertain authorship' are stigmatised by that synod as admitting 'light and unusual modes of penance for grave offences, and in the prophet's words, sewing pillows to all armholes.'

It requires but little knowledge of human nature to be assured that these commutations for times of penance speedily became the rule rather than the exception. They were a natural fruit of the system. One formality was substituted for another; the debt to the Church was recognised, and the Church was satisfied.

One other matter requires notice. The enumeration of gross sins in the Penitential of Theodore descends into the deepest abysses of human corruption, where it describes and catalogues them with the offensive cool-

<sup>1</sup> Gieseler, ii. 320; *Haddan's Remains*, p. 324.



ness of documents of this description. How were such sins made known? It must be answered that confession to the parish priest at least once a year was recommended,<sup>1</sup> though Theodore himself declared that confession to God was sufficient. What other statement could be expected from a Greek of that age with whom such an authority as the following from Chrysostom would rank among the very highest? That ancient father, commenting on the apostle's words, let 'a man examine himself,'<sup>2</sup> says: 'He does not bid one man examine another, but every one himself; making the judgment private, and the trial without witnesses. . . . He bids thee within thy own conscience, none being present but God, who knows all things, to set up a judgment and search after thy sins.'

It may be permitted to remark that one of the rules in Theodore's Penitential tends to confirm the disputed popular derivation of the English appellation of Whitsunday, applied to the day of Pentecost: 'In reverence for the gift of regeneration prayer must be offered on Pentecost in white raiment.' This certainly traces the idea of the White Sunday in England back to the earliest Saxon times, whether it satisfies etymologists or no.

Theodore died A.D. 690, at the age of eighty-eight, having held the see of Canterbury twenty-two years. He was laid with his predecessors in the monastic church of St. Peter and St. Paul, afterwards better known as St. Augustine's.

'Up to this time,' says the Saxon Chronicle, 'the archbishops of Canterbury were Roman, but from this time they were English.'

It is singular that, while Bede names his great ser-

<sup>1</sup> *Egbert's Dialogue*, Thorpe, ii. 96; see also Gieseler, ii. 319.

<sup>2</sup> *Hom. VIII. de Penit.*



vices with the highest respect, no miraculous stories are associated with him in life or death. Was it that the learned Greek was known to hold such legends in disdain, or what influence restrained the credulous monks from the usual play of their imaginations?

Contemporary with Theodore was Wilfrid, who took so prominent a part in the Council of Whitby. His zealous advocacy of the Roman cause has induced both Papal and Protestant writers to dwell on the events of his life at considerable length. But there is another reason for this. His rank, abilities, and highly-wrought energies not only made a deep impression on the men of his age, but secured for him a loving biographer. In the pages of Eddi or Eddius there remain to us a series of pictures of that age in which Saxon and Scot, Gaul and Italian figure. Wilfrid's life of vicissitudes led him from the Tweed to the Tiber, and everywhere his high qualities brought him into prominence. No wonder that such materials should still suggest for him a large place on the historical canvas, and that men should still discuss his misfortunes and his faults. He was appointed to the Northumbrian bishopric after the death of Tuda, Colman's successor.

Dissatisfied with the purity of the English succession, tainted with Scottish ordination, he is said to have sought a purer fount of Episcopal authority in Gaul.<sup>1</sup> Consecrated there, he delayed his return to Britain, and Chad was appointed meanwhile to the see he neglected. After some time Archbishop Theodore reinstated Wilfrid in the northern bishopric. Under him York once more became the chief seat of the Northumbrian bishop, after its long abandonment since the departure of Paulinus. In this position he displayed a magnificence rivalling

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iii. 28.

that of the kings. His glory and riches, the stateliness of his buildings at York, Hexham, and Ripon, his gold and silver plate, the multitude of his attendants, gleam forth from the early writers. The Northumbrian prince was aroused by such a rivalry. But the form which the contest assumed resulted from an ecclesiastical division of Northumbria, carried out by Archbishop Theodore, acting with the king and council of that nation. Northumbria was divided into three dioceses, the larger portion of it with York being left to Wilfrid. The indignant prelate withheld his consent, and proceeding to Rome made the earliest known appeal against a decision of the English Church and State.

After an adventurous journey he arrived at Rome, and was heard by Pope Agatho,<sup>1</sup> who gave him a letter acquitting him of all charges brought against him and requiring his restoration to his see. The reception of this letter may be best given in the language of Eddius, the admiring biographer of Wilfrid.<sup>2</sup> ‘He arrived after his long journey bearing the banner of victory, that is, bringing with him the judgment of the Apostolic See. Saluting the king in peace, and humbly showing the written judgment of the Apostolic See, with the consent and subscription of the whole synod, he presented it with its bulls and seals. A synod was then summoned, consisting of all the chief laity and clergy, to hear the salutary and peaceful counsels of the Apostolic See. But when they heard a mandate so contrary to their own will, some of them contumaciously rejected it. Moreover (which was yet more execrable), to the damage of their own souls, they declared that the document had been procured by bribery. Then by command of the king and his councillors, with consent

<sup>1</sup> Bede, v. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Eddius, *Vit. Wilf.*, xxxiii.

of the bishops, he was committed to custody without honour for nine months.' Such was the fate of a papal rescript in Northumbria in the seventh century. After his release Wilfrid passed some time in the south of England. There he found the South Saxons still heathen. Severed from Kent and Wessex by its great forests, Sussex seems, from Bede's description,<sup>1</sup> to have contained a scanty population in a most backward state of civilisation. These received Christianity from Wilfrid, to whom the promontory of Selsey, afterwards the seat of the bishopric until its removal to Chichester, was assigned by the South Saxon king. About the same time the Isle of Wight was conquered by the king of Wessex, and is said to have been the last 'of all the provinces of Britain to receive the faith of Christ.' Wilfrid's services were called in on this occasion also. From that day to this the Isle of Wight has been included in the great bishopric of Wessex, whose chief seat has long been at Winchester.

Soon after these events he submitted to a compromise through the intervention of Archbishop Theodore, by which he was restored to authority in Northumbria, but no longer (or only for a brief interval) as bishop of the whole kingdom. He recognised the newly constituted sees of Lindisfarne and Hexham. He was, however, again involved in disputes with the king of Northumbria on a similar question connected with the division of his bishopric, and again left the kingdom. Subsequently he was deposed by a council presided over by Brightwold or Bertwald, Theodore's successor at Canterbury, and once more carried his appeal to Rome. He brought back letters requiring the king and archbishop to reconsider the question, duly keeping in view

<sup>1</sup> Bede, xiii. 289.



the decisions already given by the Roman See. The archbishop was inclined to yield, but the Northumbrian king was inexorable.

‘Ask me,’<sup>1</sup> said he, ‘what you will for yourselves, but ask me no more on behalf of Wilfrid. The kings my predecessors, and the archbishops with their counsellors, and afterwards ourselves with nearly all the British bishops of your race, have judged his cause. That judgment, as long as I live, I will never change on account of writings obtained, as ye say, from the Apostolic See.’

But that monarch passed away, and in a subsequent reign; Archbishop Bertwald presided<sup>2</sup> at another council near the river Nidd, where the question of reconciliation was again discussed. The papal prolixity was little adapted to Saxon simplicity, and the archbishop on this ground declined to translate the pope’s letters to the king. He said they were couched in language<sup>3</sup> ‘very roundabout and with circumlocutions of words,’ a peculiarity not lost at Rome after the lapse of eleven more centuries. The result was another compromise. Wilfrid now submitted to accept the see of Hexham with Ripon, abandoning all claim to York, and ended his days as one of four prelates in the Northumbrian realm.

One who had been so vigorous an advocate at Whitby and elsewhere for Roman usages and supremacy was likely to be a favourite in the Roman ages which followed. The shrine of St. Wilfrid at Ripon became a place for pilgrimage renowned through all the north country.

Bede has prepared us to expect developments of learning and art in the Anglo-Saxon Church, following

<sup>1</sup> Eddius, *Vit. Wilf.*, lvi.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, v. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Eddius, 58.



on the labours of Hadrian and Archbishop Theodore. These may now engage attention.

Benedict Biscop holds a prominent place in the annals of Northumbrian learning. He was the founder of the monastery at Wearmouth, where Bede received his education, and also of the neighbouring monastery of Jarrow, where that illustrious man lived and died. Benedict Biscop visited Rome many times. He made what was deemed in those days a large collection of books, besides saintly relics in abundance. He was in high favour with the kings of Northumbria, and received large grants of land for his monasteries. Skilful workmen were introduced by him from France, who built in solid masonry instead of the wood which had contented St. Aidan and the monks of the Columban brotherhood. He is said even to have introduced glass into the windows of his church, which was adorned with paintings.<sup>1</sup> A skilful church musician, John the arch-chanter, accompanied him from Italy; and thus the arts and learning found a home on the banks of the Wear. Even so in our own day the visitor of the mission scenes in Tinnevelly or Sierra Leone hears the old English tunes and chants reproduced by the dark native lips.

Aldhelm was one of the most famous of the pupils of Hadrian. He was of royal descent, and became abbot of Malmesbury, and ultimately bishop of Sherborne, where he died 709. The collection of his Latin works comprises several epistles, 'the Praises of Virginity,' in prose, besides 'the Praises of Virgins,' and other poems. In that age his style was considered brilliant, and his learning remarkable. Modern taste may acknowledge some exuberance of fancy and some

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iv. 18.

poetic glow of imagination, but it will usually pronounce the diction to be turgid, and the style faulty, overflowing with incongruous metaphors. For example, he cannot speak of some rule of metrical grammar without breaking forth into this bombastic phraseology :<sup>1</sup> 'In so dense a forest of the whole of Latinity, and in such woody thickets of syllables, where ancient tradition declares that manifold rootlets of rules bud forth from each root of the words, it is not easy for the unskilled to distinguish the length of syllables.' If the length of a syllable can draw forth this cumbrous metaphor, it may be imagined what flowers of rhetoric are culled to adorn more poetical subjects.

It will perhaps have scarcely occurred to most readers that an organ, of however primitive construction, had yet sent forth its pealing notes through Saxon arches. Yet the following passage rendered from Aldhelm's 'Praises of Virgins' seems to show it :—

If the more gentle lyre seem tame and cold,  
On which the Psalmist harped his songs of old—  
And thou would'st praise the Lord with fuller sound  
Than in its tender chords can e'er be found—  
Then the huge organs from their windy chest  
May pour their thousand blasts to please thee best,  
While from the gilded cases sounding clear,  
Their modulations soothe thy listening ear.

Aldhelm's turgid Latin poetry was the admiration of the world of scholars. Outside that world was the simple English multitude. But they also had their bards. The old Saxon songs spoke to them of the traditions of their ancestral heroes, and there arose one who rhymed to them in their own tongue on the work of God. In the famous abbey of Whitby, when Hild

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. ad Acircium.*

ruled on those northern heights, there was a herdsman named Cædmon,<sup>1</sup> who altogether lacked the common accomplishment of singing mirthful songs, and when it came to his turn used to retire from supper in bashful dismay. One evening he had thus withdrawn, and having cared for his cattle lay down to rest in the stall. There one appeared to him in his sleep and said, 'Cædmon, sing some song to me.' 'I cannot sing, and therefore I retired,' was the reply. 'Nay, but thou hast to sing to me.' 'What shall I sing?' 'Sing the beginning of created things.' He began to sing, and versified the story of creation. Next morning he was brought before Hilda, related his dream, and repeated his verses. Thenceforward he was associated with the Whitby brethren, and told Scripture stories in English verse, doubtless thus conveying much truth to simple minds, and providing something which might be sung or recited by the old English hearth instead of the ancient heathen ballads. He is thought to have died at Whitby about 680.

There is something sweet about Bede's story of Cædmon's quasi-inspiration. Legend it may be, but it is not well to judge hardly the precise form into which the spirit of the age threw the origin of the precious gift of sacred song, which was to reach the hearts of the rustic multitude. The story could not well fail to be somewhat recast in the telling; but why should it seem strange that meditation on the wondrous history of creation and redemption, in a spirit softened and tender as that of Cædmon, might develop unsuspected powers, and 'the mute inglorious Milton' thus break forth into verse? Whether we now possess any of

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iv. 24.



Cædmon's genuine poems<sup>1</sup> is a matter of doubt among critical writers.

The chief glory of the early English age of learning was the Venerable Bede. He passed his life, from the age of seven to his death in 735, when more than threescore years old, in the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow. He was a man of unwearied industry, as is still witnessed by his works, which in one edition fill eight folio volumes. He wrote commentaries on most of the books of Scripture, which are still occasionally quoted with respect. He also composed treatises on grammar, arithmetic, music, and other subjects of the schools, besides saintly biography. But the work for which he is best known is his 'Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation,' ending with the year 731. Such a man in that age was of encyclopædic learning, and with all their defects his works were of inestimable value, and trained many minds. His style is perfectly simple and unaffected, as that of one who had much to say to attentive scholars, and bestowed little thought on the mere phrase. The story of his death, as told by one of his pupils, often finds a place in modern popular literature. Though not unalloyed with the characteristic superstition of the age, it is a record of simple and fervid piety, devoted industry, and affectionate reverence. Thus writes the disciple, speaking of the last work of his master, the translation into Saxon of the Gospel of St. John: 'When the third day of the week before our Lord's ascension had arrived, his breathing became more laborious, and a slight swelling appeared in his feet; yet, during the whole of it, he taught and dictated cheerfully, and sometimes said, "Learn quickly, for I know not how

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Diction. of Christ. Biog.*



long I may abide, nor how soon He who created me may take me away." To us it appeared that he was well aware of his departure; and so he passed the night wakefully in giving thanks to God.

'At the dawn of the fourth day of the week he commanded us to write diligently that which we had begun; and this we did until the third hour. From that hour we walked in procession with the relics of the saints, as the custom of that day required. But one of us remained with him, and said to him, "Dearly beloved master, one chapter is still wanting; and it appears to be painful to thee that I should ask any further questions." But he said, "It does not trouble me. Take thy pen, and be attentive, and write quickly."' The disciple then describes the farewell and little parting gifts to his brethren in the monastery. 'It is time,' he told them, 'that I return to Him who made me—who created me, and formed me out of nothing. I have had a long life on the earth; the merciful Judge has also been pleased to ordain for me a happy life. The time of my departure is at hand, for I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ.' And with many such remarks he passed the day until eventide. Then the boy whom we have already mentioned said to him, 'Still one sentence, dear master, remains unwritten.' He replied, 'Write quickly.' After a while the boy said, 'Now the sentence is finished.' He answered, 'You have spoken the truth; it is indeed finished. Raise my head in your hands, for it pleases me much to recline opposite to that holy place of mine in which I used to pray, so that, while resting there, I may call upon God my Father.' And being placed upon the pavement of his cell, he said, 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;' and as soon as

he had named the name of the Holy Spirit, he breathed out his own spirit, and so departed to the kingdom of heaven.

More than a thousand years have passed, and Bede's Northumbrian dialect would be intelligible only here and there in a few words to English ears; but such a death may remind us of one sentence at least in the creed which he and ourselves alike have recited: 'I believe in the communion of saints.' In the same faith and hope they pass into the same inheritance of promise.

Among the pupils of Hadrian may also be named two Archbishops of Canterbury—Tatwine and Nothelm. Nothelm (735–741) was famous for his powers as a scribe. He was, therefore, sent on a mission to Rome to collect books. There he was well received and obtained access to the archives. He was thus enabled to transmit to Bede important documents, which were embodied in the 'Ecclesiastical History,' as Bede acknowledges in his preface. No one can have visited any great library without being struck with the care bestowed on their manuscripts by the Anglo-Saxon scribes and the delicacy and finish of their illuminations.

In the next generation after Archbishop Theodore may be named Egbert, Archbishop of York, who died in 767, as one of those who promoted the cause of learning. He formed a library containing works of some of the classical writers and grammarians as well as of the Fathers of the Church. It was a collection which France itself could not rival, and of which Alcuin wrote thus to Charlemagne: 'Give me those exquisite books of erudition which I had in my own country by the good and devout industry of my master Egbert, the Archbishop.' 'If it shall please you

wisdom, I will send some of our youths, who shall copy from thence whatever is necessary and carry back into France the flowers of Britain; that the garden may not be shut up in York, but the fruits of it may be placed in the Paradise of Tours.'

Egbert was of royal descent. It was in his person that the see of York was definitely constituted as an archbishopric. The Northumbrian kingdom at this time, though on the wane before the increasing power of Mercia, had sufficient influence to claim Metropolitan rank for its chief see. The pope, though not without some difficulty, granted the pall; and since this time York has retained its primacy.

This notice of the foundation of the archiepiscopate of York may conveniently permit a digression on the rivalry between the two primates. It broke forth especially in Norman times, and a strange chapter might be written upon its history. On the merits of the contention, which was pleaded before popes and kings for some centuries, who shall venture to pronounce? Perhaps the full connected story remains yet to be written. The strife is an Iliad in itself; but its incidents lie scattered through many histories. An anonymous sketch of the struggle was printed<sup>1</sup> from a Lambeth manuscript about two hundred years ago, which brings it down to the year 1354. Briefly it may be said that Canterbury claimed precedence, sometimes even some amount of jurisdiction. York claimed equality; nay, sometimes asserted that all ancient Mercia was part of its province. The Primate of York, having occasion to visit Rome to receive his pall, or being called upon to take part in any general business of State or Church, must pass through his rival's province. In the great

<sup>1</sup> *Anglia Sacra*, i. 65.



councils of the nation the two archbishops must often appear. How should their claims be adjusted ?

The best known incident in the long strife is that which occurred in 1176, when Henry II. attempted to assuage it by means of a papal legate who should hear the cause at Westminster. The legate and the archbishop of Canterbury came early and took their places. The archbishop of York arrived somewhat later. He found Canterbury occupying the seat on the right of the legate, that on the left remaining for himself.<sup>1</sup> But he was equal to the occasion, and thrusting himself between the legate and his rival, sat down on his very lap. But the intruding archbishop was not in the midst of his own Northumbrians, else the issue might have been different. 'He was seized,' says Birchington,<sup>2</sup> a monk of Canterbury who wrote a history of that great see, by the bishops, clergy, and laymen ; flung upon the ground, beaten with staves and fists, and rescued only by his brother of Canterbury, who thus returned good for evil.' The blood of Becket had then given fresh lustre to Canterbury. To touch the Pope was to touch the Apostle Peter. So now to violate Canterbury was to trench on the rights of the martyr St. Thomas, and unfortunately the archbishop of York had been his bitter opponent. Thus, when the primate of York made complaint of his rough usage to the King in Council, he was saluted with cries, 'Go, thou betrayer of St. Thomas ; thy hands smell of his blood !'

The tale was told somewhat otherwise in the north, which had not yet lost (has it ever lost ?) its idea of independence. Still for many a year page after page of the records is full of protests from the archbishop of Canterbury, whenever he hears that his northern brother

<sup>1</sup> *Anglia Sacra*, i. 72 ; Gervase, *Pont. Cant.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ang. Sac.*, i. 9.



is to cross his province. For example, in 1306 Archbishop Winchelsey<sup>1</sup> hears that the archbishop of York is coming home from the Continent, and will presume to carry his archiepiscopal cross erect on his journey. There comes forth a vehement injunction to all the lieges of Canterbury. 'The officials are in every possible way to prohibit or prevent such presumption. Every place where he passes with cross erect is to be placed under an interdict. Any subject of Canterbury who shall bow to the benediction of York shall be excommunicated. None shall ring the bells or in any way favour the intruder.' At last came the time (1352), when the feud of centuries was to be stayed, and the contest '*de bajulatione crucis*,' about the right of carrying the archiepiscopal cross, was settled. Edward III. was on the throne, and the kings of England were taking a firmer grasp of their clerical subjects. Simon Islip was at Canterbury, John Thoresby was at York. This was the award of the king, confirmed by the pope.<sup>2</sup> 'Either archbishop might journey with his cross borne before him, wheresoever he would, through the province of his brother, were it in the very cities of Canterbury or York themselves. But each archbishop of York should offer officially at the shrine of St. Thomas in the Cathedral Church of Canterbury a golden image of an archbishop bearing a cross, of the value of forty pounds sterling, in acknowledgment of this peaceable arrangement. In parliaments and on civil occasions the archbishop of Canterbury, as holding the more ancient and pre-eminent see, should sit on the king's right hand, his brother of York on the left, with their crosses remaining near them. In councils and convocations the arch-

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, ii. 284.

<sup>2</sup> *Ang. Sac.*, i. 74; Wilkins, iii. 31.

bishop of Canterbury should occupy the first place or higher seat, the archbishop of York another second to it. In a wide place the cross-bearers of the two primates should advance precisely side by side. In doorways or narrow places the cross of Canterbury should precede, the other follow.' Such was the end of the strife, seven hundred years after York attained Metropolitan rank. The wrath of Almighty God, and the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, was invoked on anyone who should presume to tamper with the settlement.

But to return to the episcopal arrangements of Saxon times. An attempt was made to obtain an archbishopric for Mercia. It was not doomed to be permanently successful, though for a time it prevailed. Offa,<sup>1</sup> king of Mercia, 'the terrible,' as the Welsh called him, reduced all England south of the Humber under his authority in the latter part of the eighth century. He was addressed on equal terms by no less a personage than Charlemagne. Kent no longer held high rank in England. Its kings were vassals of Mercia or of Wessex. Why should its bishop exercise primacy over those of greater kingdoms? Thus taking umbrage at the Kentish primacy, Offa succeeded in procuring for his own bishopric of Lichfield the rank of the Metropolitan see of his kingdom. The property of the archbishop of Canterbury within the Mercian kingdom was seized, and after some difficulty and great expenditure in bribing the Roman officials, the desired pall was sent from Rome. The province of Canterbury was divided. The country south of the Thames, with London, was assigned to Canterbury, whilst the east and centre of England were to constitute the new province of Lichfield. In gratitude for the concession, King Offa granted a sub-

<sup>1</sup> Pulgrave, iv.

sidy to Rome, which became the foundation of the well-known 'Peter's pence.' But Offa died, and in 799, Kenulph or Cynewulf, king of Mercia, restored to Canterbury its primacy and plundered estates.

Thus Lichfield relapsed into its subordinate position. In a synod held at Cloveshoo <sup>1</sup>. 803, it was pronounced that 'the see archiepiscopal from this time forward never should be in the monastery of Lichfield, nor in any other place but the city of Canterbury, where Christ's Church is, and where the Catholic faith first shone forth in this island. Further also, we do, by consent and license of our apostolical Lord Pope Leo, forbid the charter sent from Rome by Pope Adrian, and the pall and the see archiepiscopal in the monastery of Lichfield to be of any validity, because gotten by surreption and insincere suggestions.'

It is said that the office of archdeacon is mentioned in England for the first time about this same era.

The fullest <sup>2</sup> list of bishops present at this synod of Cloveshoo, which finally confirmed the primacy of Canterbury, will give the number of the Saxon sees until they were disturbed by the Danish invasions :

Canterbury	Winchester
Lichfield	Elmham
Leicester	Dunwich
Sidnacester (Lincoln)	London
Worcester	Rochester
Hereford	Selsey
Sherborne	

It will be observed that Mercia ranks next to Canterbury, and then Wessex. The Archbishop of York, with his three suffragans of Hexham, Lindisfarne, and Whiterne, was not there. But the synod was one of the

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 543.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., iii. 546.

province of Canterbury, and was held under the authority of the Mercian king

But it cannot be asserted that this list contains any recognised order of precedence, for signatures to other documents may be cited marshalled in a different manner. Indeed the very act<sup>1</sup> of this Council which abolished the archbishopric of Lichfield was subscribed in the following order :

Canterbury	Sherborne	Worcester
Lichfield	Winchester	Selsey
Leicester	London	Dunwich
Elmham	Sidnacester	Hereford

Another famous name in this age is that of Alcuin, one of Archbishop Egbert's disciples at York. Having been sent on an embassy to Charlemagne, that emperor attached him to his court, and employed him in carrying out his efforts for the revival of learning in his dominions. He died at the abbey of St. Martin, at Tours, in 804. He wrote on sciences and art, and a considerable number of letters and poems addressed by him to Charlemagne are extant, and are useful in illustrating the history of that period. Thus through Alcuin the Anglo-Saxon school of learning reproduced itself on the wider field of Europe. He is still justly esteemed for clearness of judgment, and for a more pure and chastened style than most of his contemporaries. The famous Caroline Books of Charlemagne have been commonly attributed to Alcuin. Dean Milman<sup>2</sup> says:—‘It is difficult not to attribute them to Alcuin, the only known writer equal to the task.’ But they were put forth by the authority of the Emperor. Alcuin was present at the Council of Frankfort, held

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 544.

<sup>2</sup> *Latin Christianity*, v. 1.



under the presidency of Charlemagne. That Council and the Caroline Books boldly set aside the doctrine of image-worship recently reasserted by the second Council of Nicæa and supported by the authority of the reigning pope. This is another instance of the contradictory facts which meet us in these ages when dealing with the growth of the yet unsettled and unascertained papal power before the false decretals had obtained currency.

The subjects treated in this chapter have led of necessity to a somewhat discursive treatment. They have led us from the seventh into the eighth century, the early part of which was the glory of the Anglo-Saxon Church. But its close proved fatal to that early dawn of learning and piety. The restraints of morality and religion were broken through, and civil dissensions rent the Saxon states asunder. Profligacy and disunion made the country an easy prey to the Northmen, who soon commenced those predatory inroads which for a time ruined learning and religion together. If other record of this decay were lost, the earnest expostulations of Alcuin would sufficiently testify to the general dissoluteness of manners. Writing to the King of Northumbria and other leading personages from his adopted home in France, he pleads<sup>1</sup> earnestly in his still extant letters for some check to the prevailing neglect and immorality. But the warnings fell on heedless ears, and the English Church and people were to suffer the direst scourge of foreign invasion. They 'fell into the hand of man,' the fate which the Psalmist-king so earnestly deprecated for his people.

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 1192, &c.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE SAINTS OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

CANONISATION of old was the result of an irregular popular or monkish suffrage. In some cases the instinct was right which recognised a life of peculiar usefulness and holiness. But in many we can scarcely discern a trace of either through the grotesque legends which have gathered round the venerated names. It was not till the tenth century that the popes reserved to themselves the right of adding new saints to the Calendar.

Yet the popular voice made itself heard for many centuries after this, and the people instinctively elevated to the saintly rank those who (as they deemed) had suffered for them. Sometimes their persistence succeeded, and the ecclesiastical confirmation followed the people's vote. Sometimes it was but a fleeting fancy, and was in due time quenched by the authorities. Strange illustrations might readily be given. When the great leader Simon de Montfort fell at Evesham, the cry of the people went up, 'Holy Simon, pray for us.' The monk Matthew Paris speaks of him as falling for 'the cause of justice and truth,' and says it was reported 'that Simon, after his death, was distinguished by the working of many miracles, which, however, were not made known, for fear of kings.' Obviously, if the following years had been different, De Montfort the patriot might have been St. Simon of Evesham.

Stranger still is the story told by Fox of a certain priest, possibly a Lollard, burned for heresy on Tower Hill in 1439. The people believed that he had uttered a prophecy before his death, and began to make pilgrimage to the spot where he perished. It needed a royal proclamation and the vigorous action of lord mayor and sheriffs to stop the movement. The people in those days had not faith in their priests, but they were just what the superstition of the priests had made them. So, if it had not been for the interposition of authority, there might have been a St. Richard Wiche, prophet and martyr.

But in the earlier days now under consideration authority had not much to say in the matter of registry on the great roll of saintly intercessors. The local saints found ready admission, and the antiquary is sorely at fault to give any account of multitudes of Irish and other names which encumber the list.

But besides these, the earlier years of English Christianity were fruitful in men sufficiently notable amongst their fellows to be distinguished after death by the saintly title. St. Aidan, St. Chad, St. Augustine of Canterbury, and others have been already noticed. There are others of some renown. No one of any historical perception ought to enter St. Paul's Cathedral without remembering St. Erkenwald, consecrated Bishop of London in 675<sup>1</sup> by Archbishop Theodore. He was (practically speaking) the founder of the famous see of London, the first who may be distinctly styled its bishop after the flight of Mellitus. The Cathedral Church still possesses estates confirmed to it by alleged Saxon charters reaching back to his days. There were stories of miracles wrought by chips from his litter in the days of

<sup>1</sup> W. Malmes., *De Gest. Pontif.*, ii.

Bede.<sup>1</sup> Grotesque enough are some of the legends of this Saxon saint. Travelling in a two-wheeled car among the forests of Middlesex or Essex, he lost one of the wheels. The car, however, disobeying the laws of gravity, balanced itself and the bishop on the remaining wheel, and carried him safely on his errand. He died in Essex. The people of London and the monks of Chertsey contended for his remains. The river Lea was swollen by a tempest, and neither boat nor bridge offered a passage. Essex might seem to claim the sacred deposit. But no ! As the litany was chanted the river subsided,<sup>2</sup> and the London cathedral gained the treasure. And a treasure it was. In subsequent days it was laid in a shrine gleaming with gold behind the high altar. If the very dust was believed to have healing virtues, it may be guessed what the offerings at the shrine might be.

St. Erkenwald was a great London saint up to the very eve of the Reformation. Fabyan, alderman and historian, tells a story of his own days which may at once illustrate this, and show the irritable greatness of a lord mayor four centuries ago.<sup>3</sup> ‘The mayor, being at St. Paul’s kneeling in his devotions at St. Erkenwald’s shrine, Robert Byfield, one of the sheriffs, unadvisedly kneeled down nigh unto the said mayor. Whereof the said mayor after reasoned him and laid it to his charge. But that other, being some deal rude for lack of cunning, answered the mayor stubbornly, and would not own his offence. Wherefore the mayor showed his behaviour both of words and deeds unto the bench, by authority whereof the said Robert was fined one pound, to be paid toward the reparation of the conduits.’

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Milman, *Annals of St. Paul’s Cathedral*.

<sup>3</sup> Fabyan in ann. 1477.



St. Swithin, bishop of Winchester 852-862, has fared better than St. Erkenwald in the popular recollection. His legendary history is of the usual character of such compilations. William of Malmesbury, writing about fifty years after the Conquest, dwells with admiration on a story with which he illustrates this prelate's merciful disposition. 'Workmen were repairing a bridge on the east side of Winchester, and the bishop had seated himself near them that he might urge on the loiterers. And there came along the bridge a woman bringing eggs for the market. The workmen, with the usual rudeness of such people, in sheer mischief broke every egg in her basket. In her miserable condition, the little ragged old woman was brought before the bishop, who heard her complaint with pity. And not in vain, for he forthwith made the sign of the cross over the wreck, and every egg became whole again.' If St. Swithin left behind him the tradition of a character in harmony with this legendary tale, he deserved not to be forgotten. To redress wrongs, and to care for the helpless, is a part well becoming the Christian statesman and bishop. Though alas ! the larger part of the evils wrought, whether by petulance or carelessness, is as much past remedy as the broken eggs ; and there is not to be found a St. Swithin to make them whole again.

As a last request, we learn on the same authority, he pledged those who stood round his dying bed to lay his body outside the church, where his grave might be exposed to the feet of the passers by and to the rains from heaven. So he died, and this 'pearl of God lay in inglorious concealment about a hundred years.' Then the saint changed his mind, and appeared in a vision requiring the removal of his remains. So they were enshrined at Winchester with great pomp. The

15th of July was kept as the anniversary of this 'translation.' The popular belief still connects that day with the copious rainfall which the dying bishop had willed to fall on his humble grave. In his true history Swithin was an active statesman, the trusted servant of King Egbert, and the chief adviser of King Ethelwolf. Whether the skies wept or not, England had cause to mourn when he was removed, and homestead and shrine were scorched with the Danish fires.

Aldhelm, as one of the earliest of the band of English scholars, has found mention in his place. But there is the other side of his story likewise. There is the St. Aldhelm, in whose glory the monks of the ancient monastery of Malmesbury rejoiced. William of Malmesbury, one of the best of that remarkable series of monastic historians who have preserved for us the chronicles of mediæval times, dwells with characteristic ardour on the life of this, their most ancient worthy.<sup>1</sup> That he was learned, pious, and accomplished was not enough for the monastery. He must also be a saint according to monastic measure. And such a saint is depicted in full detail. The annalist confesses indeed ingenuously that he can appeal to no ancient document, but urges that he has unbroken local tradition for what he will relate. Like St. Cuthbert, this saint, heedless of the winter's frost and the night fogs of summer, immersed himself up to his shoulders in an adjacent spring while he recited the Psalter. This was certainly a prodigious miracle of bodily constitution; but he had peculiar mastery over the waters, inasmuch as not a drop of rain would fall within the ruinous and roofless walls of a church which he had built at Wareham, whatever tempest might rage around.

<sup>1</sup> *Gesta Pontif.*, vi.

But the favourite miracle of St. Aldhelm is the following :—They were building the church of St. Michael, and the walls were now ready for the roof, the beams of which had been prepared. They had all been cut to one measure ; but alas ! through some carelessness, or ‘ rather by divine providence,’ one of them proved too short. The workmen were in despair ; the beams had cost much money, and had been brought from a great distance through a roadless country, at yet greater expense. They shrank from the labour of transporting another. Aldhelm was called. He prayed silently ; there was a slight movement of his arm ; the beam became equal to the others, and the roof was completed. Twice did the miraculous beam escape when in the days of Alfred and of Edward the monastery was burned. But age and decay prevailed, and the chronicler confesses that it had perished before his day. After this why need it be told that the attendant failing to hold his chasuble when he slipped it from his shoulders after mass, it fell not, but remained suspended in the air on a sunbeam which entered through a window ? Thus did monastic rivalry heap legend upon legend on the favoured saint ; and thus did the shrine of St. Aldhelm in Malmesbury draw pilgrims in abundance, and therewith no trifling offerings, to that ancient abbey.

The story of St. Dunstan the saint as distinguished from Dunstan the statesman is not easy to disentangle ; and, indeed, from the very first, there seems to have been in him some vein of occasional madness which makes his character a puzzle to historians. He was successively abbot of Glastonbury, bishop of Worcester and of London, and lastly archbishop of Canterbury 960–988. His advocacy of the monastic life, and his efforts to increase the stringency of its rules,



have insured him the favour of monkish chroniclers and the reputation of a profusion of miracles, some of which usually find their way into the popular histories. The number of churches dedicated to his name testifies to his renown.

But among the Canterbury saints one more must be enumerated, named among the 'black-letter days': *April 19, Alphege Abp.* He held the see of Canterbury from 1006 to 1012. In his days England was reduced to the lowest ebb, when Ethelred was on the throne and the Danes ravaged at their pleasure. In 1011 the besieged Canterbury. It was captured by treason, and the archbishop fell into their hands. They were handed to a Danish king, which knew no mercy, and probably Florence of Worcester, who wrote about a hundred years afterwards, has not exaggerated in telling the horrible story of the sack of Canterbury. Alphege, or Elphege, was too precious a capture to be summarily disposed of. The English might ransom their archbishop at some great price; so the Danes held him in strait bondage until the following year. On Easter Eve they offered him life and liberty on the payment of three thousand pounds, but the archbishop refused to be the means of extorting such a sum from his impoverished people. The next Saturday he was brought forth from his dungeon into the midst of a riotous assembly. There he was beaten with battleaxes and the bones of the animals on which they had been feasting, until one of them in mercy cleft the prelate's skull. So fell Elphege. There are some rather faint assertions of miracles following his death, and all good Saxons held him for a martyr. Certainly he died a patriot's death. When Normans held rule in Canterbury, and Saxon patriots were in small esteem, an attempt was made to rob Elphege of his honour and



saint and martyr; but the more generous spirits prevailed, and the Saxon archbishop retained his place in the Calendar.

There were several royal saints in those bygone days, but the most famous of them was St. Edmund. His name may be found among the 'black-letter' days, Nov. 20, Edmund, king and martyr.' The record of his death in the Saxon Chronicle is brief and stern: A.D. 870. This winter King Edmund fought against them, and the Danes got the victory and slew the king, and subdued all the land, and destroyed all the minsters they came to.' It is said<sup>1</sup> that one of his bodyguard afterwards told the story of his master's death in this wise: After his defeat Edmund had been dragged from his place of concealment. The merciless Danes bound him to a tree, and made him a mark for their arrows, with heathen jests urging him to deny his faith. Wearied with his constancy the Danish leader beheaded him, and he was privately buried by his sorrowing people.

Thus Edmund became not only of patriot but also of saintly memory, and St. Edmund's Bury, or Bury St. Edmund's, was afterwards the richest monastery in the north country. When Canute the Dane became sole monarch of England, and learned to trust his English people as they trusted and were loyal to him, he remembered the English saints whom the Danes had slain. When was the body of the martyred Archbishop Elphege taken up from its tomb in London, and escorted by Canute and his queen, and the nobles and clergy, until they bore him into his cathedral at Canterbury.<sup>2</sup> There they laid St. Elphege's holy body on the north side of Christ's altar, to the glory of God, and the

<sup>1</sup> Palgrave.

<sup>2</sup> *Saxon Chronicle*, A.D. 1028.

honour of the holy archbishop, and the eternal health of all those who there daily seek to his holy body with a devout heart, and with all humility. God Almighty have mercy on all Christian men through St. Elphege's holy merits.'

Then also it was that St. Edmund was remembered, and Canute founded, or refounded, the monastery which held his remains. Great were its privileges, ample its estates. Few, if any, of the great abbeys of England surpassed it in splendour or in power.

It need scarcely be added to this that the legend of St. Edmund, as told in the monastery, assumed large proportions.

The romance of St. Edmund, found in the *Chronicles*<sup>1</sup> written two centuries after the Norman Conquest, is one upon which the writers expended no little artistic skill. Regarded not as history, but as a specimen of the historical novel of that day, cast into the form which was then cultivated, it is full of interest and possesses a beauty of its own. A royal Dane is brought into the land of East Anglia by one of the favourite contrivances of these ecclesiastical romancists, a boat which has drifted out to sea, and at last comes ashore in Norfolk. He is brought to the king's court, where he is beloved by Edmund, and learns every kingly accomplishment. At last he is treacherously slain by the king's huntsman, and the murder is discovered by the agency of the Dane's faithful dog, which will not leave its master. The huntsman is condemned to the same fate as that which had befallen the Dane; and being sent adrift in the same boat, without oars or sail, he floats to the coast of Denmark. The boat is recognised, and the huntsman being seized and tortured, accuses King

<sup>1</sup> Roger of Wendover, *Matthew of Westminster*.

Edmund of having murdered the lost prince. Then follows the Danish vengeance, and East Anglia is ravaged with fire and massacre. Edmund musters his forces, and a pitched battle ensues near Thetford, waged with mutual slaughter through the livelong day. Edmund regards the carnage with horror, sorrowing not only for his own comrades who had attained the crown of martyrdom, but also for the wretched heathen who had been hurled into the gulf of hell. He resolves that he will fight no more, and declares that he alone must die for his people. So it was that Edmund fell into his enemies' hands, who tied him to a tree and scourged and insulted him whilst he called upon Christ. Then they shot at him with arrows, leaving not a place in his body in which a fresh wound could be inflicted. Yet he lived and confessed Christ, until the sword of the executioner struck off the martyr's head. The body was found by the sorrowing Christians, but they long sought in vain for the head, until as they wandered through the woods the head itself called to them, 'Here, here!' and there it was, safely guarded by a huge wolf. Then were the remains buried in all honour, and years afterwards, when 'the land rested from war,' they were found with no mark of corruption. Nay, the head was reunitied to the body; only a scarlet line appeared round the neck, a symbol of martyrdom.

It is a wild story, told not without grace and sweetness as the chroniclers dwell on its incidents. It may even have done some good in its day, as possibly some of our own works of fiction may do, by putting into the hearts of some of the old mail-clad men thoughts of ruth and tenderness, and of a courage of yet higher tone than that which strikes down its foes in the battle-field. It may have done this. Yet woe to the Church which holds



falsehood for religion, and supports its faith by a lie ! If there is a lawful field for the play of human fancy, yet let it be remembered when it was said, and who said, ‘ For this cause came I into the world that I might bear witness unto *the truth*.’ After the utmost allowance has been made for the different training of the mind in past ages—after giving to imagination full room and amplest scope—it is with sorrow and shame that the reflection is forced on the mind that Christ is thus dishonoured, and His cause damaged by those who would be His friends. The same strange compound of credulity and imposture works still in rumoured miracles that none can test but millions believe. The reason of the intelligent, in thousands of instances, shocked and violated, lapses into absolute unbelief. The miracles of the Saviour Himself, outdone or caricatured by the saintly prodigies, fall into the same gulf of negation, strangled and utterly submerged by the mass of incredible fiction clinging around them. Of all human lies the falsehoods of hagiology will have most to answer for when the terrible account of unbelief shall be rendered at last.

The more prominent female saints of this era were of royal or noble extraction, who established nunneries on which they conferred ample endowments. Amongst these may be especially noted St. Hilda of Whitby, who died in 687. St. Etheldreda (corrupted into Awdry in popular English) was the foundress of the monastery at Ely, where the bishopric was subsequently established. She died in 679. St. Ethelburga was another of these recluse ladies; the fact of her being sister of St. Erkenwald has perhaps secured her London fame to this day. Her nunnery was the famous one at Barking, in Essex. St. Frideswide, in like manner, was one



of the eighth century ladies, who was honoured before the Reformation in what is now the cathedral church of Oxford. Those who list may read the stories of these ladies in Butler's 'Lives of the Saints.' They lived according to the approved mediæval pattern of sanctity, and the history of one scarcely varies from that of another as he tells it.

In such an age the burial place of venerated Christians was not only surrounded by those sentiments of regard which are inseparable from human nature, but it was the source of abundant wealth to its guardians. For a century and a half the monastery founded by Augustine at Canterbury had been the resting-place of the archbishops and kings of Kent. Archbishop Cuthbert, in the middle of the eighth century, having enlarged and adorned his cathedral, resolved that this, rather than the monastery, should be his own burial-place. It is best to give the story of that which followed upon Archbishop Cuthbert's resolution, as it was told five hundred years afterwards by William Thorne,<sup>1</sup> monk of St. Augustine's in the time of Richard II. Most fondly loyal was William Thorne to his ancient abbey. Good and true, in his pages, are those who befriended it. Evil men, and worthy of terrible epithets, are those archbishops who touched its privileges. It may be, therefore, that the remembrance of this ancient wrong heightened the indignation which trembled through his fingers as he wrote; but in the main it cannot be doubted that he gives a true representation of an ancient record in his abbey. In this wise the change of sepulchre of the Kentish primates assumed a colour of almost tragic interest as the loyal monk depicted the ancient grief. 'In the year 748 the arch-

<sup>1</sup> *Decem Scriptores*, 1772-1774.

bishop perceived his end approaching, and the moment to be at hand when his long-conceived guile against the Church of Augustine should see the light. He laid himself down in his church; he bound under an oath all his attendants that they would not divulge his sickness or his death. No bell was to be tolled, no funeral rites celebrated, until some days should have passed after his burial. On the third day the bell was tolled, and the abbot of St. Augustine's heard that the archbishop had departed. He came to carry off the body with accustomed honour; but he found the burial long over, and was told that the king's authority had broken through the ancient custom. Distressed and anxious the abbot withdrew, a disappointed man. Bregwin succeeded Cuthbert, and followed his fox-like footsteps. He also died in secrecy, and was privately buried near his predecessor. Then, at length, the bell tolled also for him; and the abbot of St. Augustine's came with a band of armed retainers, to take by force, if need be, the body of the archbishop. But he was already in his grave, and the abbot returned empty-handed home again. Appeals were threatened to the pope, and Abbot Jambert was made archbishop as a measure of conciliation. He left it as his last command that he should lie in the church of St. Peter and St. Paul, among his holy predecessors. So his body was given up for burial, and he was the last of the archbishops who was laid in St. Augustine's Abbey, A.D. 789. After that time the monks of that abbey through excessive simplicity neglected so precious a privilege, and made no complaint or appeal to king or pope. So through their stolid simplicity they lost for ever the honour, and their church was no more the sepulchre of the archbishops.' If William Thorne could have looked onward a century and a half, he might

have lamented less over that ancient vexation, and deemed the cathedral the safer, as it was the more befitting, resting-place. Hardly a vestige of the great church of St. Augustine's Abbey can be traced, with all its marvellous stores of the sainted dead. But the cathedral still shelters the crowd of historical remains gathered under its pavement. The sentiment of due honour to the departed can never be deemed erroneous as long as the story of Machpelah shall stand in the sacred page. Yet when 'THAT DAY' shall arrive it will matter little to the thronging archbishops whether they rise to their wondrous meeting from the marble pavement of the cathedral, or from the crumbling soil where once the church of St. Augustine's Abbey reared its imposing front.

But the early English Church produced not a few men of higher devotion, and more active religious zeal, than most of those who have been so far named in this chapter. In the days of its first vigour its missionaries explored with success the heathen lands of Europe. During his troubles, Wilfrid had carried on a brief missionary work in Friezeland, which then included the larger part of modern Holland. But this left few traces behind.

Willibrord<sup>1</sup> was one of the monks of Ripon, who having sojourned in Ireland, then a seat of monastic learning, was induced to lead a company of missionary brethren on the enterprise of converting Friezeland, 690. He became Archbishop of Utrecht, and died after a long episcopate in 739. There is nothing of very marked interest connected with the history of his labours, nor is it clear to what extent they were successful. Certainly, the history of Boniface shows that

<sup>1</sup> Neander, v. 55.



much was left to be done in Friezeland. The latter, the most celebrated of the early English missionaries, was a priest of Devonshire origin, named Winfred, though better known by his ecclesiastical name, Boniface. He also made his way into Friezeland, 715, but was compelled to abandon the country. He afterwards visited Rome, and thenceforward united to his former zeal an almost equal fervour of subjection to the Papacy. Returning northward, he acted as coadjutor to Willibrord, at Utrecht, for three years. Thence he proceeded into Germany, and having attained great success among the Saxon and Hessian races, invited men and women from England in considerable numbers to follow up his work. He was now made Metropolitan of Germany, with his see at Mentz, on the Rhine. But he resigned his bishopric to a fellow-countryman, and went forth himself once more as a simple missionary to the land in which his first apostolical labours had been wrought, and where since the death of Willibrord Christianity had languished. It was in 755 that he descended the Rhine again, and landed in Friezeland. There a heathen multitude fell upon him, and he received a martyr's death in the seventy-fifth year of his age.

There was a somewhat active correspondence maintained between Boniface and the kings and bishops of his native land. The tidings of his martyrdom drew forth a letter of sympathy from Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Primate of Germany, which will show among other things that the papal canonization was not yet a necessary form. 'In our general synod,' says<sup>1</sup> the archbishop, 'we have determined to celebrate annually his martyrdom. He is one whom we specially seek as our patron, together with the blessed Gregory

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 391.



and Augustine. We believe him to be with Christ, whom in his life he always loved, and whom in his death he glorified.'

While thus touching on the brief missionary activity of our Saxon forefathers, it may be interesting to give from Alcuin the order of teaching recommended to them: 'This order should be preserved in teaching adults: 1. They should be instructed in the immortality of the soul, in the future life, in its retribution of good and evil, and in the eternal duration of both conditions. 2. They should then be informed for what sins and causes they will have to suffer with the devil everlasting punishment, and for what good and beneficent deeds they will enjoy unceasing glory with Christ. 3. The faith of the Holy Trinity is then to be most diligently taught, and the coming of the Saviour into the world for the salvation of the human race. Afterwards impress the mystery of His passion, the truth of His resurrection, His glorious ascension, His future advent to judge all nations, and the resurrection of our bodies. Thus prepared and strengthened, the man may be baptized.'

The judgment of readers upon this advice will no doubt vary according to their theological prepossessions. The expressions about the merit of good works would at least seem to need some readjustment for those who accept the teaching of the eleventh and twelfth articles of our Church. Those who are versed in the missionary history of modern times will call to mind the failure of the Moravians in Greenland as long as they continued some such methodical mode of instruction, and the sudden and blessed results when they tried the simple story of Christ sacrificed. But we need not suppose that Alcuin's instructions run counter to this. There is

evidence that the crucified Saviour was in those days often, at least, the attraction which, according to His own word, 'drew all men to Him.' These notes must be taken as forming the heads of the catechetical instruction which should be given to the converts in preparing them for baptism, and it is from this point of view that they must be judged.

It is a meagre sketch to give of the old Saxon worthies, but the scope of this work will allow no more. And indeed it may be doubted if the heroic life of Boniface was half so dear to the unwholesome religious taste of that age as the legendary lives of the monastic saints who fought in solitude with more terrible foes than the Frisians, the powers of darkness.

No more typical example could well be selected than the life of the renowned Cuthbert, the great Northumbrian saint. None could be mentioned more characteristic of the prevalent tone of that age. The Venerable Bede dwells fondly on his life in the pages of his history, and has besides written his biography. Bede writes with much reverence for the great Roman Church and its lordly emissaries who sat in the chair of Canterbury. But his love and his cordial admiration are lavished on the northern saints of his own Northumbria. Even when they were tainted, as was Aidan, with that much lamented irregularity about keeping Easter, Bede's strict orthodoxy yields to admiring love for their saintliness. And when that barrier is removed and he can speak of them as accepting the Roman rule, he sets no bounds to the warmth of his admiration. It must be remembered that Bede was probably about twelve or thirteen years old when Cuthbert died. He expressly states that he received his information from those who personally knew the saint and were associated with him. Legend

in that age was of no tardy growth, but sprang up like Jonah's gourd. The substance of Bede's story of St. Cuthbert is as follows :—

Cuthbert belonged to the race of those hardy borderers then (or at any rate recently) united under the Northumbrian sceptre, but centuries after divided by bitter feuds. It does not appear certain on which side of the Tweed he was born; his religious life was spent on either side of that since famous boundary. He is described as possessing an active and vigorous frame and a ready wit; and it is said that he was induced to give himself to God's service from the age of eight years. Of his early life we are told little. A stranger on horseback advised a poultice for a painful swelling on his knee; the prescription succeeded, and the devout imagination afterwards represented the horse and rider as possessing marvellous beauty. Beyond doubt it was an angel of God, for did not angels come on horseback to the defence of Judas Maccabeus and the temple of God? Another incident throws light on the lingering heathenism, the persistency of which is discerned with difficulty through the quivering haze of monkish history. One day some monks were floating rafts of timber down the Tyne for the supply of their monastery near the mouth of that river. A strong west wind, united with the rapid ebb, prevented them making the shore at the desired place, and they drifted out to sea. In vain the assembled brethren prayed on the shore, the five rafts were driven out to sea 'until they appeared as if they were five little birds,' and 'the populace jeered at the monks as if those who despised the common laws of mortals, and who had introduced a new and unknown law of life, deserved to suffer such a calamity.' Cuthbert remonstrated, but they replied,



‘Let no man pray for them; may God have pity on none of those persons, who have taken away our old worship, and no one knows how to observe the new.’ Hereupon Cuthbert prayed, and ‘forthwith the violence of the winds being turned round brought the rafts in safety to the beach, together with those who guided them.’ The impression made on the minds of the scoffing country folk is recorded. After this a series of events follow, partly natural circumstances, to which a miraculous tone is given, partly visions and prodigies which seem to have been the natural production of brains deprived of proper nutriment and excited by continued solitude. They are heard of but little apart from monkish austerities, but appear almost inseparable from them from the very first. Cuthbert sees a light and hears choirs of the angels during some long vigils, and it is found afterwards that it was the soul of St. Aidan himself then ascending into heaven. He persists in a severe fast on a journey, and afterwards wonderfully discovers meat and bread. After this it seems he became a monk in the abbey of the famous Melrose, from whence he was removed to Ripon, then a new monastery. There he washed the feet of a guest, who proved to be an angel, for he was missing on Cuthbert’s return, and left behind him three loaves of marvellous whiteness and odour. Henceforward Cuthbert, who had happy gifts of speech and narration, was accustomed to hint that he was one of the highly favoured ones who often spoke with heavenly visitants. Cuthbert, however, was not wanting in more evangelical work. He was zealous for the conversion of the surrounding people who are spoken of as apostatising in times of calamity and resorting anew to heathen ceremonies. His personal influence is described as being



of the highest order. 'So great was his skill in teaching,' says the historian,<sup>1</sup> 'so vast was his power of loving persuasion, such the light of his angelic countenance, that no one in his presence dared to conceal from him the secrets of his heart, thinking that none of his misdeeds were concealed from him. He was wont also to preach in remote villages far from the world in wild and horrible mountain regions.'

A strange legend follows. Cuthbert walked into the sea by night, and there remained in prayer, immersed to his neck. In the morning he came forth, and concluded his prayer kneeling on the shore. Two seals or otters followed him from the deep, and fondly warmed his feet with their breath, and wiped them with their hair. Some prying monk is said to have watched the scene, and to have revealed it after the death of Cuthbert. From Melrose he was transferred to Lindisfarne, or the Holy Island, the favoured seat of Aidan and other northern saints. There he is said to have been diligent in preaching to the neighbouring peasantry. But his chief duty was to reduce the monks to a more settled order of observances. In this we are told he met with irritating opposition, but that he overcame it all by the grace of patience, and unwearied placid firmness, 'amidst all distress bearing a cheerful countenance.' The influence of such a man could not be gainsayed.

Some years were passed in such occupations as these. But in the estimation of that age there was a higher life still. It was not in community with others, not in evangelising labours, not in ordinary self-denial, that the most favoured saints were deemed to have gained their celestial honours. The life of utter soli-

<sup>1</sup> Bede, *Life of St. Cuthbert*, c. ix.

tude, where the lonely devotee lived face to face with God, was that higher life, and to this Cuthbert aspired.

Not satisfied with ordinary austerities, he withdrew himself to the islet of Farne, separated by the stormy ocean from the adjacent Holy Island. There he constructed a rude dwelling and lived in strict solitude, not without the personal neglect and filth which all good monks and hermits consider essential to holiness. There the very birds obey him, and two crows humbly request his pardon for meddling with his thatch. His fame now spread widely, and persons afflicted with demoniacal temptations came to him for relief, and received consolation. It cannot be surprising that in the visionary lives of these saints the excited fancy peopled the air with demons in even visible forms. The terrors of such a life can only be known to those who have survived it. About the year 684 he was appointed to the bishopric of Lindisfarne, and reluctantly removed from his hermitage. Various miracles were attributed to him, and it is asserted in general terms that he devoted himself to the duties of his office. But his episcopacy was of very short duration; he returned to his hermitage, and there falling ill, he was discovered in a dying state by some monks who visited the island. He said that for five days he had been nourished by occasionally biting an onion which he had by him, and that his spiritual foes had never been more violent. His parting charge was to inculcate charity and peace amongst themselves, and to hold no communion with those who did not keep Easter at the proper time. He was buried in the Holy Island, and his remains were afterwards removed, as the picturesque legend tells, to Durham, where the shrine of St. Cuthbert was the most famous in all the north country until the Reformation.

It is a sad history of misplaced faith, and misdirected energy. There had been propagated throughout Christendom one pattern of sanctity for the three preceding centuries. The life of each saint reproduced with slight variations the austerities and miracles of his predecessors. Miracles were expected as the endowments of a life of austerity as naturally as the ordinary actions of other men. What men expect they can generally find, or persuade themselves they have found; and the stories which reach the recluse himself, of strange influences which have gone forth from him, quickly persuade him that he is not as other men, but one of the sacred band on whose bidding angels wait. But indeed in that age fasting was regarded as a dynamic in the spiritual world, potent to effect almost any object. It is noted of Adamnan<sup>1</sup> that he had been fasting, immersed in a river, against a certain potentate who had wronged him, but there was no result, for his adversary protected himself by fasting also. The saint at last prevailed by throwing the sinner off his guard, so that his own unresisted fast could work out its full effect against him. How much of the Gospel of Christ infused its healing power amidst this mass of rank superstition, it is not easy to say. We can only call to mind the word which assures us that when the 'wood, hay, and stubble' of man's addition shall be consumed by the fire of God's presence, the foundation will remain, and the silver and gold and precious marbles built upon it shall endure. So may it be with many a poor self-torturing soul, which, after all, with however much doubtfulness, was really resting on Christ.

It is difficult for an Englishman of the nineteenth century to form an accurate judgment of the condition

<sup>1</sup> Reeve, *Adamnan*, Preface, p. liv.

of his forefathers twelve centuries ago. Probably no race now living on the earth is precisely in the same stage of civilisation as they were then. The advanced races have risen higher in the scale, the degraded have dropped lower and lower in savageness. We can therefore only ask, without attempting too close a parallel, what would be the ordinary developments of the Christianity of New Zealand or Madagascar apart from trained and educated European influence? And how far would the traces of old superstitions linger among them? And in fact with what amount of completeness, and with what freedom from relapse, are idolatrous ideas now extirpated in the most successful missions? Such considerations of experience as these ought to be in our minds when we attempt to form a judgment on the condition of English Christianity in the seventh century.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE LATER HISTORY OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH.

THE accession of Egbert to the throne of Wessex in 800 is the dividing line between the earlier and later history of the Anglo-Saxons. Under his leadership the long struggle for supremacy between Mercia and Wessex was terminated. After his victory<sup>1</sup> over the Mercians all the Saxon and British kings became his tributaries. The popular idea that henceforward there was a united England is undoubtedly very far from the truth. The great Alfred styled himself King of Wessex. The tribal jealousies and divisions made the country a ready prey to the invasions of the Northmen. The Saxon kingdoms retained, to a great extent, their several customs and government, and were not really welded into one until they were exposed to the terrible heat of the Norman Conquest. Nevertheless, when an able monarch, an Alfred, or an Athelstane, sat on the throne of Wessex, he was henceforward able to make his power and influence felt throughout the country, and may be fairly considered and spoken of as King of England. With a few such bright intervals, the civil history of the two centuries and a half yet remaining before the Conquest is a terrible recital of suffering. During a large part of that period the Northmen, or Danes as our histories usually style them, ravaged and desolated the country. 'They are always before us ;<sup>2</sup> we always see

<sup>1</sup> Palgrave, ch. iv.<sup>2</sup> Palgrave.

the horizon reddened with flame, we always hear the tramp of war.' In such a condition of the land a continuous or detailed history of the Church would be of limited interest, and it may suffice to note a few leading epochs and characteristics of Saxon times.

Passing over other reigns, a pause may well be made at the year 878, when Alfred gained his great victory over the Danes in the west of England, which raised the country from its lowest point of depression. The subsequent treaty by which he ceded to the Danes the north and east of England, on condition of their embracing the Christian faith, formed an era in the Church. Thenceforward the Danish element must be taken into account in our ecclesiastical history. At this time it was that the Danish sovereigns granted to the Bishop of Lindisfarne the dominion of all the land between Tyne and Tees.<sup>1</sup> In those days it would be nearly all desolate moor and forest. But this was the foundation of the princely estates and jurisdiction of the Bishops of Durham after the Conquest in their County Palatine, within which the power of life and death and the larger part of royal authority were theirs. Gradually, since the Reformation, they have been shorn of their prerogatives. In our own age the ample residue of their estates has subserved to the endowment of churches for the vast mining population gathered on the moors which concealed wealth of which Dane and Saxon little dreamed. The collier of the nineteenth century thus derives benefit, after the lapse of a thousand years, from the gift of a Danish chief.

The depth of degradation from which Alfred's care lifted his people is a familiar topic. It is most suitably illustrated by extracts from his own preface to his trans-

<sup>1</sup> Simeon of Durham.

lation of Gregory's Pastoral, of which the following nearly literal translation is given :<sup>1</sup>—

‘It came to me oft in my mind what wise men there once were in England, and how happy times there were, and how the religious men were earnest both about doctrine and about learning, and how people abroad sought wisdom and learning in this land, and how we must now get them from without, if we would have them. So clean was it ruined in England that very few there were on this side Humber who could understand their service in English, or could declare forth an epistle out of Latin into English, and I ween there were not many beyond Humber. So few such there were that I cannot think of a single one south of Thames when I came to the kingdom. God Almighty be thanked that we now have any teacher in stall . . . When I thought of all this, then I also called to mind how I saw ere it was all spoiled and burned, how the churches throughout England were filled with treasures and books, and eke with many of God’s servants, and yet they wist little fruit of their books for they could understand nothing of them, for they were not written in their own language. . . . When I had called to mind all this, then wondered I greatly that none of the goodly wise men that once were in England and had fully learned all the books would translate any part of them into their native language. And I then soon again answered myself and said they weened not that ever man should be so reckless and learning so decay. Then thought I how the law was erst found in Hebrew tongue, and after the Greeks learned it they translated it all into their own speech, and eke all other books; and also the Latin-people as soon as they had

<sup>1</sup> Wright, *Biographia Britannica Literaria*, i. 397.

learned it they translated it all through wise interpreters into their own tongue, and eke all other Christian people translated some part of them into their own languages.

‘Therefore me thinketh it better, if you so think, that we also (do the same with) some books which seem most needful for all men to know, that we translate them into the language that we all may know. This may we very easily do with God’s help, if we have stillness for it; and all the youth of free men in English-kin, those that have the means, may be put to learning while they may be doing nothing else till first they can well read English writ. Afterwards let people teach further in the Latin tongue those whom they will. When I thought how the learning of the Latin language had fallen out through English-kin, though many could read English writ, then began I among other diverse and manifold affairs of this kingdom to translate into English the book which is named in Latin *Pastoralis*, in English *Herdsmen’s book*, whilom word for word, whilom meaning for meaning, as I learned it of Plegmund my archbishop, and Asser my bishop, and Grimbold my mass-priest, and John my mass-priest. And to each bishop’s see in my kingdom will I send one copy. And I bid in God’s name that no one shall take the book from the minster, unknown, as long as there are any learned bishops, as now thank God there are everywhere.’

Thus speaks King Alfred for himself of what he had striven to do for the minds and souls of his people amidst his ‘manifold business,’ and the unspeakable anxieties of restoring a fallen people, and then guarding a realm in constant peril. He was the David and the Solomon of his people in one. Centuries afterwards, when Norman prowess had prevailed, and the Saxon



tongue was passing into a more modern form, the English song remembered him still :—

And eke Alfred,  
England's shepherd,  
England's darling.

He seems to tell us that he had succeeded in some measure in restoring learning to England. But he found himself obliged to call in foreign scholars, some of whom are named above. Grimbold he brought from Burgundy, and made abbot at Winchester. Asser has been generally said to have been brought from St. David's, and appointed to the see of Sherborne. It is also said that the famous John Scotus, known as Erigena, was amongst Alfred's learned associates, but this seems very doubtful.

In accordance with the views expressed in his preface, Alfred translated several works into English, of which differing lists have been given. It is related by Asser that he established a school for the young nobles, in which both the English and Latin tongues were taught, and in which they learned to write before they were of an age for manly exercises. To this it has been frequently added that Alfred founded the University of Oxford. This belief has prevailed chiefly on the authority of Camden, the father of English antiquarianism. Indeed, he is hardly content with naming Alfred as a founder; he ventures to speak of a yet earlier seat of learning on that venerable spot. But the extracts<sup>1</sup> which he introduces from Asser's life of Alfred, and from another mediæval chronicle, are now regarded as certainly spurious.

The comparative security established by Alfred's

<sup>1</sup> Camden, *Britannia, on Oxford.*

successes endured, though not without severe struggles, for about eighty years. Then followed terrible invasions, the result of which was the annexation of England for a time to the crown of Denmark. Such an era of disturbance and transition will naturally afford comparatively few matters of marked ecclesiastical importance. If the age of Dunstan be selected for some brief notice, it is not for its intrinsic consequence, but because it bears on some things relating to the condition of the clergy which should not be omitted. How far the monks who accompanied Augustine into England observed the Benedictine rule is much disputed. But it is generally admitted that among the other irregularities of the disturbed and corrupt centuries to which we have referred, gross deviations from the strictness of monastic life were widespread and notorious. The secular clergy were also charged with great and general departure from purity of life as well as from faithfulness to their duties. In this condition of the clergy a movement in favour of reform arose. As was natural in that age, it took the form of a revival of monastic fervour. Not only were the monasteries to be reformed, and brought back to the strictness of the Benedictine rule, but an attempt was made in many quarters to reduce to the same rule colleges of secular clergy attached to cathedrals or other of the larger churches. The names chiefly associated with this movement are those of Odo, a Danish convert, who became Archbishop of Canterbury, and Dunstan, the successor of Odo in that see. It may be sufficient thus to indicate the nature of the struggle which became so envenomed. The result was that the Benedictine rule was firmly established in the great abbeys of England, and that monks replaced the canons in some of the cathedrals. To enter at greater length

into the life of Dunstan would be to plunge into a sea of disturbance, of political intrigue, and wretched trickery, the results of which would bear no proportion to the space occupied by the narrative, and which belong rather to the civil than to the ecclesiastical historian. Passing thus lightly over those disastrous years of Saxon disunion and Danish power, the reign of the last son of Cerdic, the ignoble but sainted Confessor opens on the view. Edward occupied the throne of England from 1042 to 1066, the year in which the battle of Hastings transferred the sceptre to Norman hands. It is a reign which marks not only the passing away of a dynasty, but an epoch of time. Thenceforward must be traced the development of papal and kingly power, the consolidation of territorial sovereignties, the growth of intellectual culture and mercantile enterprise, which were to usher in the subsequent conditions of European society. Most of the changes in this reign, as far as they belong to the purpose of this history, may be more fitly handled when the Norman Conquest itself is approached.

The civil historian finds subjects of deep interest in the records of the Confessor's reign, drawn from the contrast between the feeble monarch and the energy, sagacity, and valour of the great Earl Godwin and his greater son Harold, through whom those closing days of Anglo-Saxon power witnessed a remarkable degree of national life and liberty. But to the civil historian we must leave these. We cannot, however, omit to notice the great foundation of Edward at Westminster, which has since become an epitome in stone of English history, which has been ever since the scene of the coronation of English monarchs, and in many instances the place of their sepulchres.

Some little distance from the western gate of London a small monastery had existed from the earliest days of Christianity. It stood on a spot where, between the Thames and a marshy line of some rivulets, a small island offered a site of security. Thorney was its name, which no doubt indicated the nature of the ground. Edward determined that this should be the nucleus of his new foundation, since known from its relation to the capital as West Minster. For some years he devoted the tenth of his revenues to these works. He lived to see his great church completed, but his death-sickness was on him when, on Innocents' day 1065, it was dedicated. A few days after he breathed his last. Some portions of Edward's monastery may be seen in the cloisters and school buildings, but of his church few fragments remain. It was renowned as one of the finest examples of what would now be called the early Norman style, but has long given place to the more elaborate and graceful work of the thirteenth and subsequent centuries. The defaced shrine of the Confessor abides in the centre of his transformed church, perpetuating his memory to yet more changed descendants of his English people.

If from amongst the many interesting constitutional records of this reign any incident of ecclesiastical bearing may be selected, all that belongs to the accession of Stigand to the see of Canterbury must rank as of leading importance. But this may most suitably be deferred until his personal history can be closed in the days of the Conquest.

Those who read the actual records of those days, as they have been opened to us by faithful investigators, cannot fail to be struck by the singular independence and national life of the English Church, even when such



an unpatriotic and superstitious sovereign as the Confessor was on the throne. In days when the western bishopric has been so recently reconstituted, it may be an apt illustration of the relation of the King to the Church, and of the absence of the universal Papal dictation of later days, to note how an ancient see passed away, and a familiar episcopal title came into existence. The Saxon bishops were not so closely identified with their cathedral as their successors have been. Some indeed, as those of York, London, and Rochester, are commonly spoken of as bishops of those cities. But there was an uncertain and fluctuating style used with regard to many of the others. They were frequently styled rather bishops of the tribe than of the city. Even the Primate himself was called sometimes 'bishop of the Kentish men.' Thus the chronicles and charters use the styles, bishop of the East Angles, or of the South Saxons.<sup>1</sup> The bishop of Lichfield is often bishop of the Mercians, and so with other Saxon prelates.

The west of England had been divided into two sees. There was a bishop of Cornwall since its conquest by Athelstane about 930, and a bishop of Devonshire. Bodmin and Crediton had been their episcopal seats. These were united in the days of the Confessor, and when Leofric was appointed to them in 1046 he removed his see to the fortified city on the Exe, which had already distinguished itself for valiant resistance to the Danish maritime freebooters. From that day to our own times the bishops of Exeter have exercised sway from the Exe to the Land's End. The change of title was effected by royal authority, possibly carrying out some decree of the Witan, but certainly supported

<sup>1</sup> Freeman, ii. 590.

by request from the pope. A letter from Pope Leo IX.<sup>1</sup> to Edward speaks of Leofric as being a bishop without a cathedral city, expresses surprise that he and other bishops should be in such a position, and requests Edward for God's sake and for the love of the pope to transfer the episcopal see from the 'little town of Crediton to the city of Exeter.' The same record proceeds to say that the king accordingly 'granted to Leofric the monastery of St. Mary and St. Peter in the city of Exeter, where he might place his episcopal throne.' A charter<sup>2</sup> of Edward which has been doubted, but which now seems to be admitted as genuine, further records the proceeding a few months later. It formally constitutes Exeter as an episcopal see, and assigns to it the diocese of Cornwall with all its appurtenances, as well as the diocese of Devon with all which belonged to it, that they should constitute 'one bishopric under one bishop.' It assigns as a reason for this the scanty population and the devastation of the country by piratical invaders. 'Wherefore it seemed that the bishop's seat would have more security within the fortifications of Exeter.' 'Therefore,' the charter proceeds, 'this privilege I, Edward the King, place with mine own hand on the altar of St. Peter, I, leading Leofric the bishop by his right hand, and my queen Edith by his left, place him in the episcopal chair in the presence of my earls, cousins, nobles and chaplains, the archbishops affirming and approving the deed.' The names of Godwin, Harold, and Stigand, then Bishop of Winchester, appear among the witnesses to the charter.

By a similar union the men of Dorset and Wiltshire in this reign lost their separate bishoprics, which had

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 692.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., iii. 694.

been placed at Sherborne and Ramsbury. Hermann was a foreigner who stood high in the favour of 'the Lady Edith,' Edward's queen. His bishopric of Ramsbury was poor, and through her influence, it seems, the see of Sherborne was united to it. After the Conquest he deserted Sherborne and planted his see in the hill fortress of Old Sarum, looking down on the meadows by the southern Avon, where a successor two centuries later reared the one symmetrical cathedral of Salisbury.

How Edward 'the Simple' became recognised as a saint need not here be told. It is sufficient to say that the Saxon looked back to his days as the time when he enjoyed his English laws and liberties under the mighty protection of Godwin and Harold. So he learned to call them the laws of the good King Edward, as though the slothful monarch had been their author. The Norman on his part could respect the memory of one who in all his tastes and partialities was one of themselves, and whose heir William claimed to be. The monks recognised a munificent patron; and legendary lives of Edward abounding in miracles speedily disseminated his saintly fame. Thenceforward the slothful, weak-minded, and superstitious but unpatriotic king was handed down as Saint Edward, Confessor, and many generations bowed down at his shrine as at a place where God would more certainly hear. He was formally canonised in 1161 through the influence of Henry II. who held him in great veneration. His grave was then opened,<sup>1</sup> and it is said that his body, with its long white curling beard, was seen in full preservation. To the mind of modern times the great church which the sainted king had reared would have seemed his best and stateliest monument. Not so

<sup>1</sup> Stanley, *Memorials of Westminster Abbey*, p. 120.

thought the middle ages. Henry III. determined to do him higher honour. He destroyed the massive Norman arcades of Edward, and reared on their foundations the stately pile on which so many generations of Englishmen have looked, scarcely knowing whether more to admire or to venerate. In the very centre of this new building, where the high altar might have been supposed to stand, on a raised platform Henry prepared the Confessor's shrine, rich with gilding and mosaics. There he was laid by the hands of princes, one of them afterwards the greatest of English monarchs, Edward I. In the shock of the Reformation the shrine was defaced as we see it now, and the venerated remains were removed into a meaner grave. But in the momentary revival of the abbey in Mary's time they were restored to their place in the shrine where they have since been allowed to rest in peace.

When the last crowned son of Cerdic was laid in the church which had been the object of his devotion none knew what a catastrophe was near at hand. But before passing on to the Norman times it will be desirable to notice more at length some of the relations of the clergy among themselves and towards the laity. This enquiry will partly suggest contrasts to the Norman times which followed, and partly will exhibit ancient precedents of English liberty which long afterwards served in some degree as a basis for the Reformation.

The social position and rights of the clergy<sup>1</sup> in the Saxon nations may first invite attention. In the earliest stage of missionary operations the clergy are naturally more or less grouped together in the principal stations. Afterwards they itinerate from thence, and as the

<sup>1</sup> Kemble, *Saxons in England*; Sharon Turner; Palgrave.



churches increase are gradually planted in the most promising or necessitous places. This inevitable course may be seen in the early Saxon Church, and may already have been marked by the reader. As Christianity was introduced in the various Saxon kingdoms by royal authority, we find those first centres chiefly in the neighbourhood of the principal kingly residence. Canterbury, Rochester, London, York, and other missionary centres will occur to the mind as at once the seat of sovereignty, the see of a bishop, and the source of Christianity. The itinerating work of Aidan, Chad, and other ancient worthies marks the next stage in the development of the Church. Of Chad it is said by Bede<sup>1</sup> that he ‘visited towns, country, cottages, villages, castles, on evangelising tours, not on horseback, but, like the apostles, travelling on foot.’ Speaking of Cuthbert<sup>2</sup> he adds, ‘At that time it was usual among the English tribes that, when a clergyman or presbyter arrived in a village, all men came together at his summons to hear the Word.’ Evidently Bede implies that in his own day it was not so. He speaks of Cuthbert’s days, which were the days of his own childhood, as an itinerating period which had ceased in the Church. A more settled state had, therefore, been established within Bede’s own lifetime.

The difficulty and danger of travelling, and the necessity of continual teaching and watchfulness for recent converts from heathenism, would require the centres of instruction to be multiplied as soon as possible. Hence the establishment of presbyters in different parts of the country was promoted from very early times, sometimes by the king, or the bishop, and sometimes by landowners. Archbishop Theodore prob-

<sup>1</sup> Bede, iii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., iv. 27.

ably did not introduce the usage, to which he had been long accustomed in the more settled countries, but he certainly stimulated and organised the movement. Elmham says of him that 'he excited the zeal of the faithful to build churches in towns and villages, to mark out parishes. He obtained the assent of the kings that if any were able to found churches at their own proper cost they should enjoy the perpetual patronage.' So general had they already become that the regulations of Theodore provide against simoniacal presentation to such benefices. By the time of Egbert, Archbishop of York in the next generation, he deemed it necessary to stipulate for a sufficient endowment *in land*, instead of casual offerings or tithes, which were then strictly voluntary.

But the very rapid organisation of parishes, and endowment of parish churches, has been thought to point to a more generally available source than that of private munificence.<sup>1</sup> Blackstone's theory is that the parish boundary coincided with that of the ancient manor or manors. He would thus identify each parish with some lordship of early times. But it does not appear that the manors described in the Domesday Survey coincide, except occasionally, with the parishes. Hence another theory has to be discovered. Mr. Kemble identifies the English parish in general with the original communal divisions of the early Saxons, which are called Marks. These possessed complete social organisations and defined territorial limits. It is also believed that in heathen times they had their places of worship and local priests with land for their support. The suggestion is that on the adoption of Christianity these were transferred to the service of the Church.

<sup>1</sup> Pearson, *Historical Maps of England*, p. 51.

Hence by a natural and rapid process the parochial boundaries and the Church endowment would be at once constituted. If we understand that in addition to these not a few churches were founded by private liberality, and if we allow for various changes and modifications, we shall find the principal facts of early organisation fairly accounted for.

When we consider the marvellous permanence of Saxon boundaries, when we see the ancient shires following, for the most part, the lines traced more than a thousand years ago, and the old limits of dioceses defining for us the extent of the early Saxon kingdoms, we may well believe that the parishes also were conformed from the first to the divisions recognised in the lands of the Saxon tribes.<sup>1</sup> How far these also were based on yet earlier British or Roman limitations is an enquiry upon which we need not enter. Thus before the close of a century from Augustine's arrival in England we find episcopal and collegiate churches, as well as parish churches and monasteries, spread throughout England.

The clergy enjoyed high consideration among the early English. Whatever learning or knowledge of the arts existed was almost limited to them. Injury to their life or property was rated more highly than for ordinary men. Their oath was of more force than that of other free men. Nevertheless they did not possess those immunities which in subsequent times excited so much obloquy, and which in no small degree disposed men's minds to accept the Reformation. They might indeed be free from personal service, as they still are. The serf ceased his obligation to his master when he received ordination. But Church lands were liable

<sup>1</sup> See also Stubbs, *Constitut. Hist.*, i. 227.

like all other to the dues for military service, repair of roads, and other public duties. Nor was there any exemption of the clergy from the civil law. The clerical immunity for which Becket died, and which Henry VIII. with so much difficulty destroyed, was unknown to the Saxon Church. The crime of the priest was judged by the State as the crimes of other men. ‘If a priest kill another man,’ says Alfred, ‘let all that he had acquired at home be given up, and let the bishop deprive him of his orders; then let him be given up from the minster, unless the lord will compound for the wergeld,’—that is the price at which in Saxon times each man’s life was valued.

But the Saxon priest was not separated from the common interests and lot of his countrymen by compulsory celibacy. There are abundant proofs that marriage was contracted among them. The feeling of the age ran strongly in favour of the celibate life. Bishops and councils endeavoured to enforce it; the troubles in the age of Dunstan were due to that effort, and the married clergy were in many ways held at disadvantage. Still they are to be found more or less through Saxon times. In days subsequent to the Conquest synod after synod passed laws against the marriage of the clergy and branded it as concubinage. But this only shows the persistency of the practice. ‘The marriage of bishops, as well as of priests and deacons, was the ordinary rule in Wales down to the twelfth century at least. Three, if not four, married bishops sat at Llandaff, one after the other, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a father and son among them. Sons of bishops and priests are continually mentioned, and without a hint of any feeling against them, until almost the day of Giraldus himself.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Haddan's Remains*, 209.



The payment of tithe was gradually established. It is referred to by Archbishops Theodore and Egbert, and appears to have been gradually changed from a voluntary payment into a customary one, and finally to have received legal confirmation. A grant of Ethelwulf in 855 has often been named as the legal origin of tithe. But the careful examination of his donation by Mr. Kemble proves that it extended only to the king's own estates and rights, and did not convey the tithe of the kingdom. Athelstane and subsequent kings, however, fully recognised the right to tithe, and made regulations for its collection or distribution,<sup>1</sup> some of which are minute and interesting.

Turning to the Saxon bishops, we shall find that we have to consider a twofold question—their relation to the Roman See, and to their fellow-countrymen. The first of these is encompassed with many difficulties. Acts of subservience on the one hand, or of independence on the other, unduly emphasised, might lead to a Roman or a Protestant theory almost equally untrue. An intermediate position will lie nearer to the facts.

The origin of the Saxon Church organisation, as also of the German, might seem to have prepared the way for greater submission to Rome than as yet prevailed in the Gallican Church. There ancient Churches, such as that of Vienne, claimed equal antiquity with that of Rome itself, and had not forgotten their original independence. The Saxon and German Churches had no such ancient traditions, and knew of nothing so great or venerable as the Roman See. Still we have seen<sup>2</sup> in the course of the history that a papal mandate was in very early times rejected when it seemed to run counter

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Constitut. Hist.*, i. 228; Haddan and Stubbs, iii. 636.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 74, 76.

to the cherished national independence. It has also been shown<sup>1</sup> how the principles of English freedom made a wide severance between English and continental ecclesiastical usage.

But the act of conferring a pall upon the English archbishops—the papal sanction of an archbishopric at Lichfield—the revocation of that grant in the presence of the legates at Cloveshoo—the appeals to Rome on several occasions, all show a considerable deference to the great Roman See. In this, as in doctrine and other matters, the English Church partook of the general Romeward movement of the age.

Nevertheless, the Saxon was distinctly a National Church, with its individual life and independence. Its bishops were often of royal blood, and were from the first closely associated with the civil power. Through the whole duration of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy they were appointed by the kings, either with or without the advice of their Great Council, or sometimes by the act of the Council itself. Thus we are told that Dunstan<sup>2</sup> was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury ‘sapientum consilio.’ The bishop having been nominated, the metropolitan received a royal mandate for his consecration, and the king granted the temporalities of the see. Thus Archbishop Wulfstan certifies to Canute: ‘Wulfstan the archbishop greets King Canute his lord, and Elgive the lady, humbly: and I notify to you both, dear ones, that we have done as notice came from you to us respecting Bishop Ethelwold, namely, that we have consecrated him.’

The mode of appointing bishops has been the subject of so much fatal strife in subsequent history, and of so much debate even in our times, that it may be

<sup>1</sup> P. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Florence of Worcester, ann. 959.

desirable to present a little more definite information on the practice in this respect just before the Norman Conquest. Mr. Freeman says :<sup>1</sup> 'It is clear that the appointment rested both practically and legally with the King and his Witan. Still we hear ever and anon of capitular elections, and in one case at least we even see some traces of that primitive but almost forgotten practice by which the clergy and the people at large of the vacant diocese claimed a voice in filling the episcopal chair.' Quotations from the chronicles and from charters of Edward the Confessor are alleged,<sup>2</sup> illustrating all these cases.

The phraseology of these documents commonly runs to the effect that the king *gives* such a bishopric to the person named. At the same time it is allowed that the Roman Court in the time of the Confessor was claiming a veto on the king's nomination.

If to this be added the interference of the Witan with some matters with which were Parliament now to intermeddle some modern ecclesiastical predilections would be not a little startled, the national life of the early English will receive further illustration. The Great Council or Witan<sup>3</sup> 'had power to regulate ecclesiastical matters, to appoint fasts and festivals, and decide on the levy and expenditure of ecclesiastical revenue.' Their interference with many of these matters was very minute, as may be seen by an inspection of the Saxon codes. One of the very earliest of these, the laws or 'dooms' of King Ine or Ina, enforces the Sunday holiday, the early baptism of infants, and various other religious obligations. The union of the civil and ecclesiastical elements appears in the double punishment

<sup>1</sup> *Norman Conquest*, ii. 571.

<sup>2</sup> See Freeman as above.

<sup>3</sup> Kemble.

decreed against one who buys and ships into a foreign land one of English race. He should not only pay the appointed fine, but also ‘make deep satisfaction to God.’

It may be readily understood that in subsequent ages and especially in the struggles of the Reformation, these precedents were eagerly canvassed; and that Henry VIII. had much foundation for his strong assertion that he took his stand on the ancient prerogatives of the English crown.

These considerations lead us to what was the great distinction, and the root of almost all other distinctions, between the English Church in Saxon and in Norman times. We shall see that the Conqueror separated the church courts from the civil. No such separation was known in Saxon days. The bishop was necessarily the assessor of the civil magistrate, and assisted in the administration of justice. Thus the civil and ecclesiastical powers by their mutual relations supported each other, and ensured the national freedom in Church and State. It needed another system and another law to frame the Roman Church as it has been known in subsequent ages. That system and that law we shall have to trace in the subsequent Norman times. It was not only the State, it was also the Church of England, which lay prostrate on the fatal field of Hastings. And when, after the lapse of a century or more, the Saxon recovered his tongue and renewed his aspirations for freedom, he yearned not only for the protection of his old Saxon laws, but also for the protection of Saxon custom against the tyranny of what was rapidly becoming a foreign Church. But it cost many a precious life and the lapse of five centuries before he cast off the yoke.

If, in conclusion, we touch slightly on the doctrines generally taught in the Saxon Church, the most intelli-



gible and sufficiently accurate account to give would be the following. The English were not separated in faith or practice from the Continental Churches. On the various subjects with regard to which the Church of England has been at issue with the Church of Rome since the Reformation, the teaching of the Western Church generally in that age agreed precisely with neither of those two great antagonists. There was prayer for the dead ; belief in purgatory ; superstitious reverence for pictures, images, and relics ; there was undue regard for celibacy ; there were confession and penance ; there were various corruptions prevalent both in doctrine and practice. But all these were yet more or less removed from the full Roman type as it has since been exhibited to the world. To set forth the precise shades of doctrine held in different ages on these and other topics requires an exact analysis beyond our limits and purpose. For this the reader must be referred to the scientific analysis of such works as deal professedly with history of doctrine. But on two points we may note the clear divergence of our Saxon forefathers from subsequent Roman corruption. They might have little ability, and less opportunity, to become acquainted with the Scriptures ; but they had no idea of the monstrous dogma that Holy Scripture was to be locked up from the ordinary reader. The Saxon scholars, including Bede and Alfred, did their part in rendering the books of Holy Writ into their native dialects. Even now there is no complete or adequate account of the great variety of such translations still scattered in the various libraries ; but enough remains to show the amount of pious labour which found this direction for its energy.

The second point on which we ought to note the comparative purity of the Saxon Church is the doctrine

of the Eucharist. It is true that there, as in other parts of the Church, perilous language had been used for centuries. Vague expressions were but too often a sign of vagueness of doctrine and perception. The bread in the Lord's Supper was called 'the body,' and the wine was called 'the blood,' as in some sort no Christian can hesitate to do who reads the words in which the Saviour instituted the sacred rite. These expressions were pressed in many quarters in a most misleading manner; and language was often heard which might seem to imply a very absolute and literal corporal presence, such as our own Church repudiates in the note appended to the Communion Service. And, undoubtedly, here and there transubstantiation itself was beginning to be heard of. Still when the leading Church teachers were pressed on the subject, and the question could be fairly raised—'Setting aside typical, symbolical, sacramental presence, what do you believe the elements in the Lord's Supper to be?' the answer was still for the most part that which had been in like manner given by the earlier divines: 'The elements are still simply and truly bread and wine. They can no more be transubstantiated into the substance of the Lord's body, than his human nature can be converted into the divine essence.' It was about the age of Alfred that the controversy on this subject had first been distinctly raised in the German Church. Paschasius Radbertus,<sup>1</sup> about 831, unreservedly propounded the doctrine of transubstantiation in the absolute sense, confirming it by stories of persons to whom had been vouchsafed the vision of the sacred body perceptible in the elements. This raised considerable opposition: Ratramnus, and John Scotus or Erigena, wrote vigorously in opposition; but the tide of superstition and

<sup>1</sup> Neander, vi. 300.

mysticism was flowing powerfully in. When we meet with this question again two centuries later, after the Conquest, we shall find a very different issue, and a very different fate for the opponent. On this question the homilies of Elfric, archbishop of Canterbury at the close of the tenth century, have often been quoted. After the Reformation it seemed so important to Archbishop Parker to show that the Reformed English Church stood on ancient foundations, and was propounding no new doctrines, that Elfric's homilies were translated and published. The following extract may set forth Elfric's doctrine on this subject: 'If we behold the holy housel in a bodily sense, then we see that it is a corrupt and changeable creature; but if we distinguish the ghostly might therein, then understand we that there is life in it, and that it gives immortality to those who partake of it with belief. Great is the difference between the invisible might of the holy housel and the visible appearance of its own nature. By nature it is corruptible bread and corruptible wine, and is by power of the divine word truly Christ's body and His blood; not however bodily, but spiritually. Great is the difference between the body in which Christ suffered, and the body which is hallowed for housel. The body verily in which Christ suffered was born of Mary's flesh, with blood and with bones, with skin and with sinews, with human limbs quickened by a rational soul; and his ghostly body, which we call housel, is gathered of many corns, without blood and bone, limbless and soulless, and there is, therefore, nothing therein to be understood bodily, but all is to be understood spiritually. Whatsoever there is in the housel which gives us the substance of life, that is from its ghostly power and invisible efficacy; therefore is the holy housel

called a mystery, because one thing is seen therein, and another thing is understood.'

Whatever else may be obscure in Archbishop Elfric's homily, it is clear that he repudiates transubstantiation. But the Conquest with all its changes was at hand, and it will be some ages before we hear the same note sounded by an archbishop of the English Church, and he died for it.



## CHAPTER VI.

## THE CONQUEST.

*King of England.**William the Conqueror, 1066-1087.*

It will be impossible to understand the foreign bondage which after the Conquest gradually riveted its chains round the Church of England, or the vain struggles in which the kings and people from time to time fiercely resented the pressure, unless we take a preliminary survey of what were then recent developments of the Papal authority.

For the first three centuries no general assembly of the Church was held, or was possible under the sometimes cruel and always stern repressive force of the empire. There was, indeed, much correspondence between the bishops of different Churches, and great anxiety for mutual advice and agreement. But the fundamental idea of the third century was the essential equality of all bishops as inheriting a parity of jurisdiction and authority. Still, some of the greater Churches, and Rome in particular as the capital of the Empire, received, and began to claim, a certain amount of deference.

When after the conversion of Constantine general councils became possible, and were from time to time summoned by the emperors, the question of precedence

which is inevitable in human assemblies arose. The first place was naturally assigned to the bishop of the Imperial City, and next to him were ranged some other metropolitans of the greater sees under the name of patriarchs. Thus *rank* rather than *power* was the first step towards the Papacy. But the centralising system of the Roman Empire, together with the legislation of the general councils, which was practically in the hands of the emperor and the leading bishops, tended thenceforward to throw more and more power into the hands of the patriarchs and metropolitans, and to subordinate to them the provincial bishops. To this must be added the baneful system which from the age of Constantine downwards was introduced into Roman law. Ecclesiastical offences were no longer visited with Church censures only, but were vindicated and enforced by the civil power, and by punishment reaching the property or even the life.

The Church had suffered in previous ages from the antagonism of Roman despotic power; it was now to receive the deeper injury of internal corruption from the moment when it stooped to avail itself of that despotism against the outward enemy or the internal schismatic. The first temptation of this kind under which it fell was caused by the turbulent and impracticable sect of the Donatists in Northern Africa. It is true that the Donatists by riot and tumult brought the civil hand inevitably upon themselves. But, unhappily, in the course of these proceedings no less a Church teacher than the great Augustine was led into assertions which may almost justify the proceedings of the Inquisition itself. He had often given utterance to sentiments of the most sublime Christian toleration. But with that inconsistency which more or less marks all the writers

of those times, he was drawn by the heat of controversy to write thus :<sup>1</sup>—

‘Why should not the Church use force in compelling her lost sons to return, if those lost sons were compelling others to their destruction? Is it not a part of the care of the shepherd, when any sheep have left the flock, to bring them back to the fold of his master when he has found them, by the fear or even the pain of the whip if they show symptoms of resistance? What else is the meaning of “Compel them to come in”? Wherefore, if the power which the Church has received by divine appointment in due season, through the religious character and faith of kings, be the instrument by which those who are found in the highway and hedges, that is in heresies and schisms, are compelled to come in, let them not find fault with the compulsion.’ Although an opposite conclusion might be quoted from this illustrious man, and although, amongst others, Chrysostom could write about the same time :<sup>2</sup> ‘It is contrary to Christian principle to subdue error by violence, but by persuasion, by reason, by gentleness, must we labour for men’s salvation,’ yet it is enough that such an exposition of the words ‘Compel them to come in’ had been heard from the teacher who more than any other was to mould the opinions of the coming centuries.

The code of Theodosius at the end of the fourth century contains the edicts of the several emperors of that age on matters of religion. The sixteenth book<sup>3</sup> contains a long section on the treatment of heretics, and others on apostates, on Jews, and on Pagans, their sacrifices and temples. The edicts thus brought together

<sup>1</sup> Aug. *De Correct. Donatist.*, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Chrysost. *De S. Babyla.*

<sup>3</sup> See *Codex Theodosian.*, ed. Leipsic, 1741, lib. xvi. tit. 5, 7, 8, 10.

vary from tolerance to extreme intolerance, as might be supposed from the character of the emperors. But the general drift and ultimate result of the whole is a system of extreme coercion. For example, by a rescript<sup>1</sup> of Theodosius and Valentinian there is a heavy fine imposed on heretical clergy. Arians, Macedonians, and Apollinarians may not have a church within any city. Eunomians, Valentinians, and many others may not be permitted to meet or pray on Roman soil; they are incapable of service in the army; they are not permitted any right of disposing of property by gift or by testament. Penalties of outlawry and of exile enforce these severities. In like manner apostates were dealt with under other imperial laws.

Heathenism<sup>2</sup> was gradually suppressed under increasing penalties, until by several edicts it was made a capital offence.

This will be sufficient to show how far back the principles and practice of religious persecution must be dated. From the moment when the Roman emperors adopted Christianity—for it would hardly be true to say they became Christians—from that moment Roman imperialism introduced its baneful tyranny into the realm of conscience, and gradually made bishops the agents of its arbitrary laws. These edicts spread persecution as a principle of jurisprudence over Europe. The empire fell, but its laws remained.<sup>3</sup> To this armoury pope and jurist and canonist came, and drew forth their desolating weapons of persecuting statutes. They may have sharpened the imperial sword, which was left rusted and blunted when the empire sullenly

<sup>1</sup> *Codex Theod.*, xvi. tit. v. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Codex Theodos.*, xvi. tit. x. 4, 13, 20, 25, &c.

<sup>3</sup> See page 186.



withdrew, but when they took it up it was after all nothing but the old Pagan sword, cross-hilted now, with which they smote what they were pleased to call heresy.

The Saxons knew nothing of Roman law; they brought with them into Britain their own customs and free usages; yet even these were more affected in the course of time by Roman law than is sometimes imagined. But in Gaul and in Italy the codes of Theodosius and Justinian remained dominant for centuries, at least in the great cities which retained to a great extent the systematic laws of the empire.

From what has been so far said it will appear that by the middle of the eighth century when the Roman bishop finally broke off from the Empire of Constantinople and transferred his allegiance, or such portion of it as he saw it necessary to retain, to Charlemagne and the new line of Western emperors, there had gradually accrued an indefinite patriarchal jurisdiction over Western Europe which touched the authority of the local bishops at many points, but was precisely formulated in very few. Such a power was capable of great development in favouring circumstances. The fundamental formula was exceedingly simple. 'Peter was the prince of the Apostles, and to him was confided by his Master the government of the whole Church. He was bishop of Rome, and transmitted to his successors in that see the same ecclesiastical principedom.' An uncritical age accepted without question each step of this proposition. If historical proof was wanting, legend and apocryphal writings abundantly supplied the vacuum.

It is not necessary to suppose any organised plot for developing this monstrous dogma into modern Papacy. It is quite sufficient that from age to age circumstances have thrown into the way of ambitious pontiffs oppor-

tunities of enlarging their power, and of building on that foundation ever-increasing claims.

About the age of Charlemagne and of Egbert of England one of these opportunities occurred which has led to the most fruitful consequences. Two notorious forgeries then imposed on the world. The first,<sup>1</sup> somewhere about 760, purported to be a grant from Constantine bestowing high privileges on the Roman See. It was to have supreme authority over the four other patriarchal chairs of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, and all other churches. It was to be judge in all causes pertaining to the worship of God and the Christian faith. There was a grant to the Pope of the use of imperial robes and insignia. The Roman clergy were to rank as nobles, and to use the emblems of high rank. The sovereignty of Rome, Italy, or the western regions was added. The *or* was afterwards changed into *and*, and construed to mean the islands, on which ground Hadrian IV. granted Ireland to Henry II. The ludicrous inconsistency which is apparent between this marvellous document and all the records of preceding history mattered little to an age of ignorance. And indeed, if the authentic life of Constantine allowed no place for such a fable, it cost but little effort to construct a legendary life which might admit the donation and whatever else might be needful.

The second great forgery was somewhat later, and belongs to the middle of the ninth century. It is the strange collection put forth under the name of Isidore, and generally known as the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals. It purported to contain letters and decrees of bishops of Rome, beginning with the earliest centuries, and claiming supreme jurisdiction for the Roman See as given to

<sup>1</sup> Dollinger, *Fables respecting Popes of the Middle Ages*, v.

it by the Lord Himself. It is unnecessary to enlarge here on these documents. Roman divines are now as anxious to shake off their discredit as English writers are to point out what a treacherous foundation they are for the structure of Papal power. It suffices that these forgeries were admitted with scarcely a question. It will be seen that the earlier uncertain but great patriarchal claims of the Roman See were at once transformed. They were now represented as a universal jurisdiction handed down by an unbroken chain of succession from the first century, and further resting on a grant of the great Constantine. Still, for two more centuries the consequences of this change were not pushed home. The bishops of Rome were then verging towards their lowest point of degeneracy, when evil women held power, and when times were such that the revolting story of the female Pope Joan,<sup>1</sup> however baseless (as Dollinger appears to have proved), was deemed not incredible in the following centuries. From this abyss of degradation the Papacy was lifted in the middle of the eleventh century, chiefly through Hildebrand, the great contemporary of the Conqueror. Besides his other achievements, under his auspices the false decretals, with further additions, were drafted into a complete code of Papal law, which was set forth as the legal standard for the ultimate court of appeal of Christendom.

A few words may possibly indicate the insidious advance made by the Hildebrand canonists. The false decretals had aimed chiefly at lowering the power of metropolitans<sup>2</sup> by making every bishop amenable only

<sup>1</sup> Dollinger, *Fables respecting Popes of the Middle Ages*, i.

<sup>2</sup> Hallam, *Middle Ages*, chap. vii.; *The Pope and the Council*, by Janus, chap. iii. 7.

to the immediate tribunal of the pope. All accused persons might not only appeal to the supreme pontiff from a sentence, but even during the progress of a cause before an inferior tribunal. New sees were not to be constituted nor removals of bishops allowed without the pope's sanction. But by the spurious additions of the Hildebrand canonists it was decreed that no bishop should exercise his functions until he had received the confirmation of the pope. This provision at once laid every national Church prostrate under the feet of the pope. As this principle received further development the Roman Episcopacy has gradually lapsed still more, even in modern times, into the mere creature of the pope's will.

But to place the papal power in a position of full independence it was necessary to change the mode in which bishops of Rome had been hitherto appointed. This revolution also was effected at this remarkable epoch. It may be possible to give a sufficiently accurate sketch of this great transfer of power without entering into details which would carry us too far into the history of other countries. The early bishops of Rome were undoubtedly elected by the people, and as certainly in Christian times the confirmation of the choice by the emperor was always awaited. Even after the dissolution of the Western Empire this was usual. Charlemagne considered that he inherited this together with the other imperial prerogatives when he was crowned emperor of the West. After his decease, his successors, both of his own line and others which followed it, exercised this mark of sovereignty, excepting in times of dire confusion in Church and State. They even, in some instances, nominated the pope. In 1059 a papal decree varied the mode of election. The Roman people were



judged to have forfeited their right. The seven cardinal bishops who held sees in the neighbourhood of Rome, and who had originally been suffragans to the unaggrandized Bishop of Rome,<sup>1</sup> were to elect the pope.

The concurrence was to follow first of the cardinal priests and deacons (or ministers of the parish churches of Rome), and afterwards of the laity. Thus elected, the new pope was to be presented for confirmation to the emperor. This will sufficiently explain what the since famous body of cardinals originally was, and how they attained the power and rank which have since been so conspicuous in history. This revolution, decreed by Pope Nicholas II., is generally acknowledged to have been the work of Hildebrand. It needed little more to complete the change. The concurrence of the laity and the confirmation by the emperor were speedily cast aside as superfluities, and the entire independence of the Papacy was achieved.

It was in this revolutionary period that the Conqueror stood triumphant on the field of Hastings. Though Hildebrand did not himself ascend the papal throne as Gregory VII. until 1073, nine years later, he had been for some years the greater power which stood behind the pope and directed the Roman policy. The invasion of England by the Normans was one of the great papal opportunities. William was eager to strengthen his dubious claim to the desired throne by the sanction of the Church. The writers of that age vary in the details of the story, but it is clear from their concurrent testimony that Harold had been drawn by William into the engagement of a solemn oath, the purport of which was to secure the succession

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Mid. Ages*, vii.

of the English crown to the Norman duke. Harold's breach of this engagement, skilfully used at Rome, procured the sanction of the Papal See to William's enterprise. Hildebrand, at least, if no one else, would see all that might be gained to papal authority by this measure. The pope in consistory pronounced in favour of William, urging him to avenge the perjury, but adding the ominous condition that 'England when conquered should be held as the fief of St. Peter.' The pope further sent to William a consecrated banner, and a ring enclosing a relic of St. Peter, be it a hair or be it a tooth, as the narratives vary. William himself was too powerful and sagacious a monarch to fear the consequences of a condition which he would regard as mere words to be played with, and which he never allowed to carry sway while he lived. But the bearing of such a condition, coupled with the canon law now set forth based on the decretals and the donation of Constantine, will be manifest even to the least observant. It was thus that the short-sighted policy of sovereigns, looking only to the exigency or convenience of the moment, admitted principle after principle in favour of ecclesiastical power, which gradually made the weaker monarchs helpless, and sorely embarrassed the most vigorous for several ages. It was enough that Alexander II. and Gregory VII. should assert Constantine's donation and the vassalage of England. It might for the moment seem almost inoperative, but after-ages would find that a terrible power was thus growing up in the Vatican. Thus <sup>1</sup> 'the first Crusade was preached, and preached by Rome against the liberties of England.'

The thoroughly national aspect of the Saxon Church, and its close relations with the civil government, have

<sup>1</sup> Freeman, *Norman Conquest*.

already been noticed. William felt that he could not be secure on his throne until the influence of the Church was assured to his side. Acting in this matter again in concert with Hildebrand, he admitted legates from Rome, by whose authority he procured the deposition of the leading Saxon prelates. The see of Canterbury was of prime importance. It was then occupied by Stigand, a man of inferior abilities, but a sturdy Saxon patriot, who had made an unwilling submission to the Conqueror.

The accession of Stigand to the archbishopric presents features of so much interest bearing on the questions now before us, that we must glance back to the days of the Confessor. In accordance with his Norman partiality, Edward had elevated to the see of Canterbury Robert, who had formerly been abbot of the famous Norman monastery of Jumiéges. To him was due the introduction into England of alien priories, which were ultimately doomed to fall long before the Reformation, a kind of first-fruits of the greater ruin which was to overtake all the monasteries. Normans were already in Edward's time acquiring estates in England, and granting manors to some favourite monastery at home. On these manors they planted a small monastic house to shelter some members of the foreign establishment, who might manage the property and transmit the proceeds to the mother foundation. Such were the alien priories, always hateful to all good Englishmen, who thus saw their own country impoverished to enrich foreign ecclesiastics.

In the reaction against the Normans which was led by Godwin and his sons, A.D. 1052, Archbishop Robert fled for his life.



At the great meeting of the Witan<sup>1</sup> which rallied round Godwin on his return from exile, sentence of banishment and outlawry was pronounced upon Archbishop Robert 'and all the Frenchmen who had reared up bad law, and judged unjust judgments, and counselled evil counsel in this land.' To the primacy thus vacated Stigand was appointed by the action of the Witan. But this vigorous proof of insular independence was to bring evil fruit in after days. The secular power without canonical pretext, had made vacant, and had filled, the highest ecclesiastical office. Robert, the deprived archbishop, carried his complaint to Rome in vain, and died at length in exile at Jumiéges. But his Norman sovereign did not forget his subject's grievance and it furnished the second charge in his declaration of war against Harold, that 'Godwin and his sons had banished Bishop Robert and all Frenchmen from England.' Under these circumstances, Stigand was unable for six years to obtain the pall from the Roman pontiff. Benedict X. then conferred it, but was himself unable to maintain his title to the Papacy. As Benedict was regarded as irregularly appointed, Stigand's case was made yet worse in canonical minds. Thus the position of this prelate was regarded by many as a dubious one. He was treated legally as archbishop, and as such exercised all the power and influence of that high position during the remainder of the Confessor's reign. But there was a hesitation about receiving consecration at his hands on the part of many bishops of his province and scruples were plainly expressed about the ecclesiastical validity of his acts. It could not be otherwise considering that for centuries past the reception of the pall had been deemed essential to the entrance of an

<sup>1</sup> Freeman, ii. 334.



archbishop into his full spiritual preeminence. Even Harold received coronation at the hands of the northern primate rather than of Stigand. To depose a Saxon prelate whose antecedents were thus anti-papal and English would be equally acceptable to the pope and to the Conqueror. Accordingly, the pope's legates readily pronounced his deposition, and the great see of Canterbury was placed at William's disposal.

Stigand ended his few remaining days as a prisoner, or at least under close surveillance at Winchester. His memory fared ill at the hands of Norman chroniclers. They set before us<sup>1</sup> the picture of a sordid miser, round whose wretched neck was suspended the key of a writing casket. This being found and opened after his death disclosed the secret repositories of immense treasures. Such stories are usually grotesque exaggerations. Patriotic fancies suppose the old archbishop to have been storing up the means for some hoped-for day of Saxon revival. Whatever may be the truth, it might at least have been wished that the Saxon succession at Canterbury should have closed with more dignity. Together with Stigand, other bishops and several leading abbots were deprived, and soon the only remaining bishops of the Saxon race<sup>2</sup> were Siward of Rochester, and Wulfstan of Worcester.

Wulfstan had already in Edward's days acquired a saintly reputation. He survived the Conqueror, dying in 1095, after a prolonged life in which he commanded sufficient influence with both races to mitigate in some measure the harsh results of the Conquest. Some of his work yet remains in Worcester cathedral, but a more enduring fame belongs to him from his efforts to

<sup>1</sup> Will. Malm., *Gest. Pont.*, i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Stubbs, *Constit. Hist.*, i. 282.

abate the shameful traffic in slaves, which had received a stimulus from the savage warfare which had desolated England. Bristol<sup>1</sup> was a chief seat of this trade. Men and women of English birth were there bought and sold, subjected to infamy, and exported to Ireland. Law had failed to deal with this evil, but the preaching of Wulfstan is said to have been efficacious, at least for the time. The saintly reputation of Wulfstan flourished at Worcester. A century later he had an unworthy devotee. King John of England<sup>2</sup> trusted body and soul to him. 'To God and St. Wulfstan I commend my body and soul' was his parting aspiration; and the figure of St. Wulfstan still appears as a guardian beside that wretched king's sleeping effigy in Worcester cathedral.

The most picturesque incident in the subsequent legendary history of this Saxon saint is that which describes his supposed intended deposition by the Norman king and the Italian primate. In the new minster of Edward, says the curious legend,<sup>3</sup> Wulfstan was called upon to surrender his episcopal staff and ring, as one unworthy to hold them, simple, unlearned, and ignorant of the French tongue. Not to prelate or king would Wulfstan surrender his charge. Advancing to the tomb of the Confessor, he said: 'Thou knowest, blessed king, how unwilling was I, and how thou didst lay this charge upon me. I was duly elected, but it was thy will that called me to this office. Now there is a new king, a new law, a new archbishop. They accuse thee of error in making me a bishop. Not to them, for they gave it not; to thee, who gavest, do I resign this staff.' Then he struck the shrine with the staff, saying, 'Receive it,

<sup>1</sup> Freeman, *Norm. Conq.*, c. xix.    <sup>2</sup> Roger of Wendover, in *ann.* 1216.

<sup>3</sup> Wendover, in *ann.* 1005.

my lord the king—give it to whom thou wilt.’ The solid stone was pierced and the staff remained immovable. None could wrench it from the grasp of the sainted king; no prelate, not the primate himself. Once more Wulfstan appealed to his dead master: ‘Give me back my staff, or show to whom it shall be given.’ The solid stone at once ‘yielded as if it were clay,’ and all was mutual blessing and forgiveness.

Such were the legends which in that age so speedily gathered round one of saintly repute, and such was the mode in which afterwards men explained the marvel that a Saxon prelate should have retained his see in England after the Conquest. But, with this exception, the bishoprics and leading offices in the Church were speedily in the hands of Normans, who had been appointed by the Confessor, or were now introduced by William. Many a year elapsed before any man of Saxon origin could hope for high preferment in England.

The appointment of Stigand’s successor was a matter of high political concern. In selecting Lanfranc for this eminent position William introduced a man of higher mark, in point of culture as well as statesmanship, than, with the exception, perhaps, of Theodore, had ever sat on the throne of Canterbury. Lanfranc was a native of Pavia, where he studied law and other branches of learning. In the schools of Italy there yet lingered a tincture of scholarship and a breadth of reading not elsewhere known in Europe. In the prime of life Lanfranc was induced to leave Italy and open a school at Avranches, in Normandy, to which multitudes of disciples were speedily attracted. But in the midst of his career he withdrew, from some unexplained reason, to the monastery of Bec, at that time of small repute or dignity, where he practised the usual austerities. His



reputation followed him, and the monastery speedily acquired importance.

About the year 1053 the Duke of Normandy incurred papal displeasure by marrying in a manner which violated in some unknown degree<sup>1</sup> the restrictions enforced by ecclesiastical law. Lanfranc took the side of the Church, and either for this or for some other reason, for accounts differ, was commanded by William to leave the duchy.

The story of his dismissal and first meeting with the duke is characteristic, and ought to be presented as nearly as may be in the original lifelike narrative.

‘The duke,<sup>2</sup> violently embittered against him, commanded him to be thrust out of the monastery and expelled the kingdom. So he departed who was the joy and consolation of the brethren, and deep grief remained behind him. Because they had no better, they gave him a three-footed horse, for the fourth was useless, and one servant. On his way he soon met the duke, whom he saluted, his lame horse meanwhile at each step bowing his head to the ground. The duke at first turned away, but moved by the Divine mercy regarded him, and with a friendly nod invited conversation. With a well-timed joke Lanfranc began: “By thy command I am leaving thy territory at a foot’s pace, limited by this wretched steed; but that I may obey thy commands give me a better horse.” The duke laughed, and replied: “Who asks a gift from an offended judge, when the charge has not been answered?”’ Lanfranc with ready eloquence seized the opportunity. The two men speedily understood each other. Lanfranc returned to his monastery, and the brethren ‘sang with heart and voice all the day long, *Te Deum Laudamus*.’

<sup>1</sup> See Freeman, *Norm. Conq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Vita Lanfranci*, 9.



Henceforth Lanfranc took a high place in William's favour, and soon extricated the duke from his matrimonial difficulty.

He afterwards became abbot of the new abbey of St. Stephen, at Caen, and in 1070 accepted, after long hesitation, the archbishopric of Canterbury. He was consecrated in the midst of desolation. The cathedral<sup>1</sup> had been ruined by fire, and everything in Church and State was in confusion.

In whatever other arts the Saxons may have been superior to the Normans, it is certain that a new era in architecture was introduced by the Conquest. The Norman prelates were munificent builders. The remains of Saxon masonry are scanty and poor. But there can be no one of ordinary knowledge and observation who has not vividly present to his mind some one at least of the grand Norman naves of the cathedral and abbey churches. Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Peterborough, Ely, St. Alban's will at once occur as vivid embodiments of the power with which the Norman builders worked. These and more, to say nothing of the remains in parish churches, are due to the century which followed the Conquest. The work which<sup>2</sup> Lanfranc commenced at Canterbury has chiefly perished. His new cathedral experienced the fate of its predecessor, and was burned after the lapse of about another century. The pointed arches of the present stately cathedral tell of other builders and later times. Lanfranc brought with him Gundulf, one of his brethren from the abbey of Bec, who has left his mark in England to this day. Besides the work which Gundulf superintended for Lanfranc in Canterbury, to him has been attributed the Castle of Rochester, and the White Tower or central

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Lanfranci*, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Eadmer, *Hist. Nov.*

fortress in the Tower of London. He died as Bishop of Rochester, where the cathedral nave still testifies to his enduring work.<sup>1</sup>

The independent line of policy which the Conqueror maintained towards the Papacy has already been indicated. He showed himself able to use that power for his own purposes, without submitting to its dominion. He was laying up a perilous set of precedents for his successors when they became weaker and the pope stronger; but he had no fear for himself, and was ably seconded by Lanfranc. The archbishop was a man of liberal culture, from a part of Italy which was rather imperial than papal in its tendency. It must also be remembered that his education had been formed before the system of Hildebrand had been matured; and, though a friend of that great pontiff, he was not under his personal influence.

The conditions on which the papal sanction to the Conquest had been given were not forgotten in Rome. A legate was sent to demand an oath of fealty from William to the pope, and the regular payment of Peter's pence. William replied with haughtiness,<sup>2</sup> 'To do homage to thee I have not willed, and I do not will. I never made the promise. I do not find that homage was ever performed by my predecessors to thine.' The money, he said, should be transmitted. The legate appealed to Lanfranc, who replied coolly, but with much polite deference, that 'canonical obedience' he would ever render to the Apostolical See, that he had done what he could for the legate, and that if the king had declined to yield, it was no fault of his. 'To my lord the king I suggested, I advised, but I did not persuade

<sup>1</sup> Eadmer, *Hist. Nov.*

<sup>2</sup> Baronius, *ann.* 1079, xxii.; Ellis, *Orig. Letters*, iii. i. 8, 9.

him.' Gregory attempted to put a yet stronger pressure on Lanfranc, threatening him with suspension and excommunication if he should fail to present himself in Rome within four months from the date of his letter. Lanfranc, with William's support, was sufficiently strong to disobey, and the pope did not venture on carrying out his threat, indeed he was involved in political difficulties with the emperor quite sufficient to occupy him.

The principles of ecclesiastical law laid down in this reign were quite in character with what has so far been said of the king and archbishop.<sup>1</sup> The bishops were to be vassals of the Crown, owing service for their lands on the same footing as the temporal barons. The church synods might pass no laws which were not agreeable to the king. The clergy might not acknowledge anyone as pope without the king's assent. Papal letters and instruments might not be published without the royal sanction. No ecclesiastic might leave the kingdom without permission.

So early were these principles asserted. The battle which was fought around them will assail us with its uproar through all the centuries until the Reformation. Even now faint echoes of it are heard from time to time, when some voice is raised against the mild dominance of the State over the Church of the nineteenth century.

On one important matter the Saxon usage was entirely changed, and with disastrous consequences. The Saxon bishop, as we have seen,<sup>2</sup> sat with the civil magistrate, and there was rather a blending than a confusion of jurisdiction. William separated the ecclesiastical from the civil court. He might seem to himself to be limiting the episcopal power; and while his vigour, sup-

<sup>1</sup> Collier, *Ecc. Hist. Records*; Freeman, *Norm. Cong.*, c. xix.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 132. Blackstone, iii. 5.



ported by such a primate as Lanfranc, could dominate the ecclesiastical courts, no evil result might be apparent. But he had, in fact, erected in the midst of England a rival jurisdiction. When the restraints on the exercise of papal power broke down, as they speedily did, our forefathers found themselves delivered up in the dearest points of social existence to bishops who were papal officials, and who carried out a foreign canon law under the severest penalties, with the ruinous prospect of an appeal to Rome itself. This arose from the change introduced by William, and the Reformation itself failed entirely to deliver England from the oppressive yoke of ecclesiastical law and ecclesiastical judges.

William's charter<sup>1</sup> by which the separation of the courts was effected runs to the following effect. That 'no bishop or archdeacon should any more hold pleas concerning episcopal laws in the court of the hundred, nor bring matters pertaining to spiritual causes before a secular tribunal. That all persons episcopally cited should appear at a place to be named by the bishop, and there answer, not according to the usages of the hundred, but in accordance with the canons. That if any one so cited should be contumacious, after a third summons he should be excommunicated; and if need be, the sheriff might then interpose to support with the secular arm the episcopal judgment. Finally, that all sheriffs and royal officers were prohibited from interfering with episcopal jurisdiction.'

Little did the sagacious, though imperious, monarch know what developments the canon law was even then receiving, and was yet to receive; and how for centuries his successors would be struggling, and for the most

<sup>1</sup> Spelman, *Concil.*, ii. 14.



part in vain, to set bounds to the separate episcopal jurisdiction thus set up.

In the frequent synods held by Lanfranc we recognise another change which stamped an exclusively ecclesiastical character on these assemblages. The mixed nature of the old Saxon councils was now condemned. 'Know <sup>1</sup> all men,' said William's charter, 'that I have judged it right to amend the episcopal laws up to my time: it was ill done, and not in accordance with the holy canons that they were regulated.' Henceforward clergy and laymen met in separate councils.

Lanfranc held a series of these synods in which he endeavoured to combat the worst corruptions of the clergy. If in these he reckoned their marriage, it is no more than we should expect. It was decreed that thenceforth no priest should marry, no married man be admitted to sacred orders, and no marriage be valid without the priestly benediction.

Yet that all these attempts failed may be learned from repeated notices of the same thing in the synods of the next two centuries. In 1107 Pope Paschal wrote to Anselm dispensing with the regulation against the ordination of priests' sons, 'because <sup>2</sup> the larger and better part of the clergy belonged to that class.' The same subject recurs in the synod of London 1237, in the constitutions of Archbishop Peckham in 1279, and even in the proceedings of later synods.

For example, among the records of Archbishop Chicheley,<sup>3</sup> only a century before the Reformation, there may be read a severe reprobation of married clergymen taking part in the proceedings of ecclesiastical courts.

The removal of the seats of bishoprics to the more

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, 82.

<sup>2</sup> Collier, *Records*, xvii.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkins, iii, 369.

considerable towns, which was in progress about this time, has already received some notice. Perhaps in no respect has English life been more strongly marked off from the continental life than by the different influence exercised by the great cities. In the Roman imperial system, which was reflected in all the ecclesiastical arrangements of the empire, the city was every thing, the country nothing. The bishop in that system was bishop of the city where his seat was fixed, and from whence he ruled his diocese, which at first (it must be remembered) was a word of civil rather than ecclesiastical usage. Among Celts and Saxons it was not so. There is still a bishop of Meath and of Ossory, of districts rather than of towns. Even now, in England, whatever the magnitude and wealth of some towns, or the attractions of others, the city does not rule the country. The country-life to the Englishman ranks as best and highest. In Saxon times this was pre-eminently so, and the bishop neither of necessity fixed his residence in the chief town of his diocese, nor took his title from it. It has been already noted that he might have his see at Crediton, but he usually styled Bishop of Devonshire. The Conquest brought a change in this matter also. Referring<sup>1</sup> to a decree of ancient councils, that bishops' sees should not be fixed in the smaller towns, it was now ordered that certain sees should be removed. Several changes of this kind accordingly followed. Sherborne lost its episcopal rank dating from the earliest days of Saxon Christianity. The see was removed to the fortified hill of the now desolated Old Sarum. The Norman cathedral which its narrow precinct would permit must have been small. Something more than a century later the bishop's seat was brought down into the plain, and

<sup>1</sup> Will. Malms., *Gest. Pont.*, i. 42.

the one symmetrical cathedral raised its stately form in the meadows of the Avon, at New Sarum, or Salisbury. The see of Lindisfarne had already been removed to Durham, and the westernmost bishopric to Exeter. The little country town of Lichfield,<sup>1</sup> 'far from cities, in the midst of woods, and by a flowing rivulet, cramped in position, and unworthy of episcopal rank,' was abandoned for a seat within the Roman walls of Chester. Why these changes were made centuries ago may, perhaps, be a matter of little interest to any but the antiquarian. Yet if history is to be anything more than a lifeless register, there should be some endeavour to place ourselves by the side of our forefathers, and understand what they thought. We have the almost contemporary record of the Malmesbury monk. He describes the Chester of that day as lying in a district poor in corn but abundant in cattle and fish. The inhabitants were fond of milk and butter, and the richer sort lived on flesh, and held wheat or barley bread as a thing of high value. Perhaps the next remark points out the importance of the place, which led to the removal of the Lichfield see to this remote corner. It was the emporium of the Irish trade. It also possessed a monastery which of old times had been occupied by nuns. It would be an inaccurate picture of the times were we to pause at things of material interest, and omit the legend which in the eyes of that age sanctified the ground. St. Werburgh was a Saxon princess of the seventh century, who had founded the nunnery, and of whose sanctity the chronicle, which tells of the removal of the see, with serious earnestness gives this grotesque illustration. She had a country farm whose produce was much ravaged by wild geese. The bailiff com-

<sup>1</sup> Will. Malms., *Gest. Pont.*, iv. 172.



plained to the lady that he could not keep off these marauders. 'Go,' said she, 'and shut them all in the house.' The bailiff was astounded, and thought she must be jesting with him; but as she gravely repeated her order, he went and called the birds. With outstretched necks they obeyed, and were duly shut in. The temptation was too much for the bailiff, and he cooked one of them for supper. But saints are not thus to be deceived, even in the matter of uncounted wild geese. The lady discovered the theft, and commanded the bones to be brought. Under her hand flesh, skin, and plumage reappeared; and the whole flock, having first made obeisance, in unbroken number soared away. Therefore, at Chester was she in high honour, and, being prompt in her answers to petitions, she was much sought in the prayers of women and children.

What is this but some fairy tale of antiquity dressed in a quasi-Christian garb? If it be judged too puerile to repeat, the answer must be that true history must show people as they were.

Whether the scantiness of corn was the cause or not, or whether St. Werburgh was after all but a poor saint, does not appear. Chester was deserted by the next bishop, and did not resume episcopal rank until Henry VIII. elevated it into a bishop's see, and assigned the monastic church of St. Werburgh for the cathedral. Probably, however (as men for the most part act on rational motives), Chester was found too distant, and most inconveniently placed, to be the seat of a bishopric extending into Warwickshire. Thus one bishop only in Norman times sat at Chester. His successor migrated to a stately home at Coventry. There, Leofric, Earl of Mercia, and his yet more famous spouse Godiva,



had reared a sumptuous monastery in the days of the Confessor. 'So resplendent was it with silver and gold that the very walls of the churches seemed too straitened for such treasures.' These treasures, says William of Malmesbury, the bishop coveted, and from these he sent the needful bribes both to the royal and the Roman courts. Thus the Mercian bishop for some generations fixed his see at Coventry. The cathedral of that city has perished, and the bishops returned before long to their ancient seat at Lichfield, but the episcopal title of 'Lichfield and Coventry' brought down to this century the memory of those ancient vicissitudes. Recent changes have assigned the whole of Warwickshire to the see of Worcester. Probably the modern ribbon-weavers were not sensitive on the subject, for Coventry has lost its episcopal rank. Older times would perhaps have continued the style as 'Worcester and Coventry.'

When the illusive right of electing the bishop was lodged in the hands of the diocesan chapter in the twelfth century, and the chapters strove hard to make it a reality, long disputes ensued between the monks of Coventry and the canons of Lichfield as to their several elective powers. More than once each presented a bishop to be confirmed in the see. In 1228 the controversy<sup>1</sup> was heard before the pope, in the dark days when the pope, after John's submission, was supreme in England. The pope determined that the election should rest jointly with the two chapters, and that they should meet alternately at Coventry and at Lichfield on these occasions. Finally, when the great abbey of Coventry, with its cathedral, disappeared in the reign of Henry VIII., it was decreed by Act of Parliament<sup>2</sup> that the

<sup>1</sup> *Anglia Sacra*, i. 437.

<sup>2</sup> Act 33rd Henry VIII.; *Anglia Sacra*, i. 458.

election of the bishop by the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield alone should have the same validity as if the Chapter of Coventry had survived to act jointly with them.

The other great Mercian see of the Oxfordshire Dorchester was subjected to a yet more extreme migration. From the banks of the Thames Remigius,<sup>1</sup> 'small in stature but great in heart, dark of complexion but bright in works,' removed to the northernmost limit of his diocese, and placed his new cathedral on Lincoln's 'sovereign hill.' We are told<sup>2</sup> that Dorchester was even then a poor village with a majestic church; but that Lincoln was one of the most populous towns in England, an emporium of traffic by land and by sea. So Lincoln attained its ecclesiastical rank. Remigius died the day before the consecration of his new cathedral; 'envious death took him away from so great a pleasure.'

The East Anglian see had already suffered changes; it was now removed from Elmham to Thetford, and shortly afterwards to its abiding place at Norwich, then a wealthy and populous city.

The ancient and wealthy monastery of Ely was transformed into a bishopric in 1107.

Finally, it may be noted here that William Rufus annexed Cumberland to the crown of England, and made it a county analogous to other portions of English soil. Its previous condition had been one of ambiguous dependency under lords of British, Scotch, or Saxon origin. Carlisle was restored and fortified, and in 1133 Henry I. made it the seat of a bishopric.

To Lanfranc's days must be referred a revision of the Church service which thenceforward obtained very

<sup>1</sup> R. Wendover, *in ann.* 1085.

<sup>2</sup> William of Malmesbury.

general use in England, and is referred to in the preface to our prayer-book as the 'Use of Sarum.' Osmund was one of William's warriors who was rewarded with the bishopric of Sherborne, now removed to Old Sarum, and more than a century afterwards finally settled at New Sarum or Salisbury. The arrangement of the details of divine service had belonged of old usage to the bishop in his own diocese. Osmund took great pains to collect clergy who were most versed in ritual and rubrical matters, and with their aid he arranged a service book which received the sanction of the archbishop. Hence arose the title which may yet be seen appended to the designation of the Bishop of Salisbury in that characteristically modern publication, 'the Clergy List,'—'Provincial Precentor of Canterbury.' Whether any duties pertain to the office when the Synod of Canterbury meets, can be known to very few outside the inner ecclesiastical circle.

In 1087 the Conqueror died. 'How much Lanfranc mourned, who can tell,' writes a monk of his cathedral, 'since we who were with him feared he would die from anguish of heart.'<sup>1</sup> Two years afterwards their archbishop followed his master at an age of more than eighty years. When he was gone no sufficient influence<sup>2</sup> remained to control the passionate fierceness of the new king. At once a turbulent era opens, which is, however, not a mere ecclesiastical anarchy, but a time in which the contest of great principles in Church and State must be traced and recorded.

But before passing on to these, some account must be given of the literary character of Lanfranc and the great controversy in which he bore a part.

It has already been indicated,<sup>3</sup> that when the con-

<sup>1</sup> Eadmer, *Hist. Nor.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Page 135.



troversy on the nature of the presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper again became prominent, the issue would be found different from that noted in the tenth century. The most famous scholar in France contemporary with Lanfranc was Berengar. He was a man of liberal mind and great logical powers, who advocated the opinions of Ratramnus and Erigena in opposition to the transubstantiation views which had been making rapid progress since their days.<sup>1</sup> The troubles in which he was involved in consequence of his boldness do not belong to the scope of this work. Gregory VII. would have allowed him to shelter himself under ambiguous declarations which might cover either a spiritual or corporal presence, but the fanaticism of the opposing party prevailed. Berengar was forced to recant, and the doctrine of transubstantiation made a great advance towards supremacy, though it was not formally declared a doctrine of the Church until 1215.

In the early stages of this controversy Lanfranc took an active part. Berengar wrote to him expressing his astonishment that he should have pronounced the opinions of Johannes Scotus heretical. If this were so, he said, 'you have pronounced a judgment rash and unworthy of the powers God has given you. You have not as yet grounded yourself in Holy Scripture, or conferred much with those who have been more diligent in Scriptural studies than yourself. If you reckon John a heretic, whose opinions on the Eucharist I maintain, you must be supposed to regard as heretics Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, not to mention others.' The future archbishop and Berengar were thus thrown into opposition. Lanfranc wrote vehemently against him in a

<sup>1</sup> For an account of Berengar and the controversy generally see Neander, vi.313.



work entitled 'On the Body and Blood of our Lord.' There are some other remains of his literary labours, but they are not regarded as possessing intrinsic importance. As far as this bears on the history of the English Church, it is obvious to notice that the contrast between the teaching of Archbishop Elfric at the close of the tenth century and Archbishop Lanfranc at the close of the eleventh is ominous of all that was to follow in sacramental doctrine.

Lanfranc is said by the author of his life<sup>1</sup> to have sedulously 'corrected according to the orthodox faith' corrupt copies of the Scriptures and of the fathers. A lover of manuscripts might well tremble at the consequences of such probably arbitrary and uncritical correction. But a more certain benefit was the provision of books made by Lanfranc for Canterbury, which must have suffered sorely in that respect in the fires and plunderings of the previous centuries.

With the death of Lanfranc in 1089, the long concordant action of the Crown and Church of England passed away. New forces came into action; the canon law was to be the wedge riving asunder the sturdy oak, and bringing untold disasters on multitudes who should have found undisturbed shelter under its branches.

<sup>1</sup> See also R. Wendover, *in ann.* 1090.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE GROWTH OF THE PAPAL POWER.

*Kings of England.*

<i>William Rufus</i> . . . . .	1087—1100		<i>Henry II.</i> . . . . .	1154—1189
<i>Henry I.</i> . . . . .	1100—1135		<i>Richard I.</i> . . . . .	1189—1199
<i>Stephen</i> . . . . .	1135—1154			

BEFORE entering on the history of the stormy times which followed the death of Lanfranc, some technical matters again demand attention. It will be necessary, also, to trace yet further some papal developments belonging to that age of revolutions.

As feudal arrangements were gradually crystallized into a legal system, the question inevitably arose in what light the estates of bishops and of ecclesiastical corporations were to be regarded. The sovereigns of Europe naturally considered them as parts of their dominions, liable to contribute like other lands to the support of the power to which they owed allegiance. Under some limitations this obligation was not denied. But the question of feudal allegiance took another form which caused the gravest political difficulties. In that age visible signs were employed in conferring power or ownership of property. Since the days of Charlemagne,<sup>1</sup> or at least one of his successors, the reception by a newly consecrated prelate of a ring and crozier from

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Med. Ages*, c. vii.

the sovereign had been the sign of formal investiture in all the rights and honours of the see. But Hildebrand saw in this ceremony a mark of bondage to the State which must be obliterated. In 1080 he made<sup>1</sup> this decree: 'If any man henceforth shall accept a bishopric or abbacy at the hands of a layman, let him not be held as bishop or abbot, nor let any hearing be given to him as to a bishop or abbot. Moreover, we interdict to him the grace of St. Peter and the entry of the Church until by repentance he has given up the place which wrongfully by canvassing and disobedience (which is the sin of idolatry) he has taken. In like manner we ordain about the lower dignitaries of the Church.

'If any emperor, king, duke, marquis, count, or any secular potentate or person, shall presume to give investiture of bishoprics or any ecclesiastical dignity, let him know that he is bound by the same sentence. Moreover, unless he repent and restore the proper liberty of the Church, let him feel the vengeance of divine punishment in this life both in body and in other respects, that his soul may be saved at the coming of the Lord.' Thus was the gauntlet thrown down before the princes of Europe, and the battle of investitures must be the first of the series of combats to be described.

As this decree of investitures came into force the mode of episcopal elections which supervened becomes important to notice. From the earliest times a body of clergy had been associated with the bishop in his cathedral church. What their precise functions may have been, beside the responsibility of performing the cathedral services, is a matter of grave antiquarian

<sup>1</sup> Labbe, *Councils*, vol. x. A.D. 1080, ed. 1671.

discussion. But some such corporate body was attached to each cathedral. In England some of these, as, for example, at Canterbury since the time of Dunstan, were monastic bodies. In these cases the head of the monastery with his monks, in addition to their ordinary duties, constituted the chapter or ruling body of the cathedral. In other cases, for example in the London diocese, the cathedral clergy took no monastic vow, but were a body of canons under the headship of a dean. Attempts had been made in former times to reduce the canons under some kind of monastic rule. But these had failed. One manifest point of difference was this: Unlike monks, who could hold no separate interest in the monastery lands, the canons might enjoy separate endowments, called prebends, belonging to the cathedral, but not merged in its common property. These, often wealthy, prebends conduced to non-residence, and gradually resident and non-resident canons became recognised facts.

When the twelfth century dawned with its rapidly maturing ecclesiastical troubles, the people had long lost their right of electing their bishop. The old Saxon mode of appointment by the king,<sup>1</sup> with or without his Witan, was disputed by the new papal statutes; and when a compromise was sought between king and pope, the cathedral chapter was selected as a convenient constituent body to hold the illusory right of episcopal election. It was a hapless fate. The pope held over them the rod of canonical obedience, and his absolute claim of the right to reject any nominee but the one pleasing to himself. The king brought to bear upon them the pressure of regal authority, which, save in times of weakness, usually compelled them to elect his

<sup>1</sup> See page 130.



candidate. Still, though little more than a mockery, the mere form of election to so high a dignity, coupled with continual efforts to make the right a reality, tended to confer additional importance on a seat in the capitular bodies of cathedral churches.

With these prefatory notes the thread of English Church history after the death of Lanfranc may be resumed. William Rufus was on the throne. He had all the defects of the Norman character without its excellences. Rude, profligate, and coarse, he 'feared not God, neither regarded man.' All Normans regarded Anselm, Abbot of Bec, Lanfranc's old monastery, as the man most worthy to succeed him in the see of Canterbury. Anselm, like his predecessor, was of North Italian origin, born at Aosta in Piedmont, 1033. He was a pupil of Lanfranc in the Abbey of Bec, where he succeeded him as prior and afterwards became abbot. If Anselm had been known only as a scholar and divine, his name would have shone forth with untarnished lustre. Dean Milman<sup>1</sup> thus gives his mental portrait: 'In his philosophy, as in his character, Faith was the priest who stood alone in the sanctuary of his heart; Reason, the awestruck and reverential minister, was to seek satisfaction, not from the doubts (for from doubts Anselm would have recoiled as from treason against God), but for those grave questionings, how far and in what manner the harmony was to be established between the Godhead of Revelation and of reason. The theology of the Church in all its most imperious dogmatism was the irrefragable truth from which Anselm set out. . . . Faith condescended to knowledge, not because faith was insufficient, but because knowledge was,

<sup>1</sup> *Latin Christianity*, viii. 5.

as it were, in the contemplative mind a necessary fruit of faith. He could not understand unless he first believed.'

The list of Anselm's works is a formidable catalogue. These are a few amongst the number,—'On the Essence of the Godhead;' 'Original Sin;' 'Free Will;' 'On the Contempt of the World.' These titles will suggest, on the one hand, the philosophical conceptions which, with great logical keenness, he analysed in their metaphysical bearings, and, on the other, the contemplative monastic spirit by which he was no less distinguished. But the treatise for which he is best known in our own time is the 'Cur Deus Homo,' a tract in the form of a dialogue, in which he analyses with the severest but clearest logical deduction the reasons and consequences of the Incarnation as bearing on the redemption of mankind. In our own day this treatise has been severely canvassed, and some eminent writers have attributed to it an exceptional historical importance as constituting a new era in theology. Those who object to that part of the redemptive work which is represented by the word 'satisfaction,' commonly maintain that it was a dogma unknown to the early Church, and introduced by the authority of Anselm, from whom it has been propagated through the schoolmen and their successors in the Roman and Protestant Churches. This is strenuously denied by others, who must, however, grant that the luminous clearness of Anselm represented this doctrine to subsequent ages in more defined outlines than it had ever known before. Perhaps some, who most value the treatise, might now be disposed to admit that Anselm had attempted to define too closely the debt and satisfaction to God for the sins of mankind after the fashion of a debtor and creditor account

among men, a process which with some minds may raise more doubts than it solves.

Those who would see the character of Anselm drawn from another side may refer to the chapter of Milner's 'History of the Church,' in which he dwells with love and admiration on the grasp which this great divine laid upon the work and person of the Redeemer, and the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. One who unites in himself the suffrages of the Roman theologian, the Protestant historian, and the philosophical analyst must have had no common excellences. As a metaphysician, in his great controversy with Abelard Anselm dealt with some of the greatest problems which have vexed modern thought. How are we assured of the existence of God? Anselm answered with the realist school that the very fact of the idea of God being found in the mind of the creature was the proof of His existence. The mind of the creature cannot create; it perceives what God communicates to it or imprints<sup>1</sup> upon it.

This was the man who, in an evil day for his peace and for the tranquillity of England, was brought into connection and inevitable collision with the fierce Norman king. The recluse scholar, the venerated of the monastery, the revered of many disciples, unaccustomed to opposition, was summoned, when past threescore years of age, to deal with hard men and evil times. The story of Anselm's troubled life has been given to us in such graphic detail by his devoted attendant Eadmer, that the very abundance constitutes a difficulty. An epitomising treatment, however needful, seems harsh and uninviting, after the full tide of twelfth century life which flows through that faithful chaplain's narrative.

<sup>1</sup> For Anselm's philosophy see Neander, *Church History*, vol. viii.



With a view to history rather than to biography, a selection <sup>1</sup> may be made of such scenes as may illustrate the progress of the campaign which the popes were now carrying on to settle the investiture question. There were many side questions and many detached skirmishes, but the main battle lay around the investitures, and into this struggle Anselm threw himself with all the power of his nature. His life will display the progress and the conclusion of the dispute.

For four years Rufus kept the see of Canterbury vacant. Partly, perhaps, from the love of arbitrary power and his unwillingness to have a man whose official duty it would be to check his excesses. But chiefly because the vast estates belonging to the Primate threw their revenue into the royal coffers. On feudal principles Canterbury was treated as a lapsed or vacant fief, and the monks and tenants of the see were loud in their complaints. Ecclesiastical landlords in those days were the least oppressive, and the king's agents, like a grasping farmer with a short lease, were determined to squeeze all they could out of the land, regardless of the state in which they might leave it.

The Canterbury monk <sup>2</sup> records with a shiver of recollection how the rents were raised year by year, and how 'you might see the basest of men, contemptuous of monastic holiness, stalking through the cloisters with scowling and menacing brow, demanding money for the king, rushing here and there, lavishing threats, and boasting of their power and authority.' These arbitrary proceedings were extended to other sees and dignities, and uneasiness spread not only among the ecclesiastics, but among the nobles, who began to urge the king to

<sup>1</sup> This account of Anselm follows Eadmer, *Historia Novorum*.

<sup>2</sup> Eadmer, *Hist. Nov.*, i.



give them an archbishop. Anselm was suggested to him as the fittest person. Rufus swore his favourite oath, 'by the holy face of Lucca,<sup>1</sup> that neither Anselm nor any other except himself should be archbishop for the present.'

At this time Anselm was paying a prolonged visit to England. His biographers are exceedingly anxious to clear his memory of the very smallest desire for the vacant archbishopric. Yet it is quite certain that there was a very influential movement among some of the Norman nobles and ecclesiastics to secure his appointment, and equally certain that he was aware of it, while the king on his part roughly resented the pressure. At this time and under these circumstances, Anselm visited England, and was detained, as his biographers would have us believe, against his will. Be this as it may, Rufus was attacked with a severe illness at Gloucester early in 1093. Bishops, abbots, and nobles were gathered round his bed, expecting his death. It was suggested to the sick man that in caring for the salvation of his soul some atonement for past oppression was needed. He ought to set free prisoners, remit debts, place pastors in the churches he had seized, and especially restore the liberty of the Church of Canterbury. We are asked to believe that it was without any knowledge of what was going on that Anselm was then living near Gloucester, and was now summoned to the royal presence with all speed. After receiving the king's vows of amendment of life he stood aside. Rufus was again pressed on the subject of the archbishopric, and intimated that he was then considering it. Shortly he declared amid general applause, 'Abbot Anselm is most worthy of that honour.' The scene which followed in the

<sup>1</sup> A crucifix renowned for its miracles.

king's sick chamber is almost unimaginable. All that can be said is that the prevailing monastic type of holiness deemed such a struggle with worldly greatness befitting one of saintly aspirations. Anselm turned pale at the king's words, but was seized and dragged to the bedside that he might receive investiture by taking the pastoral staff from the king's hands. He struggled with his captors, and protested that he would never consent. Then followed a long dramatic scene, fervent protestations from the bishops, from the king, from the attendant monks—vehement denials on the part of Anselm. All in vain! The king called upon them all to fall down at the feet of the abbot, and break him with their entreaties. But the abbot fell down also amongst them, and we are to imagine them all grovelling on the floor together, while the red king shouted to them from the bed. This was too much, and the undignified drama must be brought to a close. Wrought up to the needful pitch of excitement, they shouted, 'Bring hither the pastoral staff—the pastoral staff!' They held the abbot's right hand; some dragged him, some pushed him, and so they brought him to the bed where the king was lying. The king held out to him the staff; but he closed his hand and would not receive it. The bishops then strove for a long time in vain to force his fingers, which were clenched upon the palm. At length the forefinger was raised, the staff was placed on his closed hand, and held there by the bishops. Then acclamations were raised—'Long live the Bishop!' The bishops and clergy began to chant with full voice the *Te Deum*, and carried rather than led Anselm into the neighbouring church. He wrote afterwards to his brethren at Bec: 'It looked a dubious point whether insane men were dragging a sane one, or sane men dragging a mad-

man.' There were more protests, there were letters, and tears, but nothing more. So Anselm became archbishop of Canterbury, and (which is the main point at present) received investiture by the staff at the king's hands. Still considerable difficulties arose from the king's refusal on his recovery to reverse his arbitrary proceedings, and his unwillingness to make full restitution of the lands and privileges of the see of Canterbury. At length these impediments were surmounted or evaded for the present. Anselm did homage to the king in full assembly of the nobles at Winchester, and received possession of the temporalities of the archbishopric. He was consecrated in December 1093, and so entered upon his calamitous office. Thenceforward he found himself thwarted at every turn by the opposition of the king, which he seems to have aroused by some ill-timed resistance. The kings for many centuries looked to the bishops for liberal contributions on all occasions of State necessities. Anselm declined any but the most limited aid; he feared it might look like simony, and would bend to no persuasions. He asked the king for permission to hold synods. Rufus replied, 'When I think it good I will see to this; but it will be for my own pleasure, not for thine.' He besought him to fill up the vacant abbacies, and received the angry answer: 'What hast thou to do with it? Are not the abbacies mine? Thou dost what thou wilt with thy farms, and may not I do what I will with mine abbacies?' So things went on, until Anselm made the usual request for permission to go to the pope to receive the pall. A further difficulty arose here. Two rival popes were claiming the allegiance of Christendom. Was Clement III. or Urban II. the true pope? It was a question on which Rufus might conveniently and even reasonably doubt. So



he rejoined, 'From which pope dost thou wish to receive it?' 'From Urban,' replied Anselm. Rufus answered that 'neither his father nor himself had ever permitted anyone to be acknowledged as pope in England without his approval; to do otherwise was the same thing as to aim at taking his crown.' Violent as Rufus was, he had inherited from his father a just political perception of the importance of the principle now at stake. He might contend with passion; but in this case it was clear that the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was pitted against the royal prerogative, which also embodied in this matter national independence.

Thenceforward each archbishop in his turn was made to feel at critical moments the pain of a divided allegiance. The form of homage to the king conflicted with the oath of allegiance to the pope. In the last hour of Roman bondage, the discrepancy startled Cranmer. He could hardly have been more than dimly conscious how far in separation from the Roman See he would have to travel. But in taking the two contradictory oaths of papal and royal vassalage, which his predecessors had taken and reconciled to their consciences as best they might, he recorded a protest that the laws of God, the statutes of the realm, and the king's prerogative should rank first in his obedience. It is interesting to see Anselm face to face with the same difficulty for the first time in English history. He stood alone or almost alone in the kingdom. The nobles and the rest of the bishops urged him to submit to the king. Anselm replied with a clear statement of this grave difficulty of conscience. He prayed his fellow-bishops to help him in the sore strait how he might unite fidelity to the king with obedience to the Holy See. 'I beseech you,' said he, 'to advise me how I may



do nothing contrary to my obedience to the pope, and not offend against that fidelity which I owe to my lord the king. It is a grave matter to deny by contempt the vicar of the blessed Peter. It is a grave matter to violate the faith I have promised the king. Grave, indeed, is that which is urged upon me, that it is impossible to keep one of these without violating the other.' The bishops advised submission to the king. Anselm, replied with the most absolute declaration of the doctrine of Peter's succession, and his own unreserved obedience to the pope in all the things of God. His reply was received by the king with extreme wrath, and the bishops returned with this message: 'The king requires an immediate reply without ambiguity to his demands. The whole kingdom is complaining of this attempt against the imperial dignity and crown of our common lord. For whosoever takes away the prerogatives of the royal dignity, takes the crown and kingdom. Consider the matter, we pray thee; abandon the obedience of this Urban, who can do nothing for thee against an angry king. Cast off his yoke. Be free, as an archbishop of Canterbury should be, awaiting the declaration of the royal will. Acknowledge thy fault, and like a wise man accept the king's wish, and put to shame thine enemies.' But the firmness of Anselm defeated all attempts to move him. Against so high a dignity all ordinary modes of prosecution failed, and something like a dead-lock followed. Then came an unexpected political manœuvre on the part of the king. He negotiated directly with Urban, promising to acknowledge him as pope, and stipulating that the archbishop's pall should be sent to the king himself. A legate arrived bearing the pall; Rufus attempted to negotiate with him for the deposition of Anselm, but

the attempt failed. Ultimately, Anselm stipulated that the legate should lay the pall on the altar at Canterbury ; he would then take it ‘ as from the hand of the blessed Peter.’ Thus the constitutional difficulty was surmounted, or at least evaded, and peace seemed to be possible.

But the king refused to redress the wrongs of which Anselm complained, and he demanded license to proceed to Rome. The king replied : ‘ It is useless. We do not believe he has committed such a sin as to need the pope’s special absolution. And as for counsel, he is better able to give it to the pope, than the pope to him.’ The archbishop still pressed his demand till the king answered : ‘ If he goes let him know that I shall take the whole of his archbishopric into my own hands, and no longer receive him as archbishop.’

The end of these weary proceedings came at length. In the latter part of 1097 Anselm found his way to Rome, where he was received with high honour. But the emissaries of Rufus quickly followed him, and by means which were well known in those times, succeeded in delaying the threatened excommunication. But in all these contests time was on the side of Rome. Principles are seldom very clear to the popular mind, and are soon forgotten. What was manifest to the world was the violence of an arbitrary king, the sufferings of the tenants on the sequestered estates of Canterbury, a Church thrown into confusion by the absence of its head, and the greatest divine in Christendom, of unimpeached sanctity of character, in distant exile. It was a losing game for the Crown of England.

Time went on. Urban died in 1099, and William Rufus received the news. ‘ Let him incur God’s hatred who cares for that,’ replied he ; ‘ but what sort of a man

is he who is now pope?' 'In some things like Anselm.' 'By the face of God he is of no account then. But he shall stand by himself, for by this and by that, his papacy shall not this time extend over me. I have my liberty, and shall do what I will.' Rough and coarse indeed! Yet this he resolved, no man should be pope in England without his sanction. One more year and the Red King himself was laid where he could rage no more.

Evil were those days for England both in Church and State. They made the claims of Rome seem more than tolerable. Some earthly arbiter was needful against overbearing tyranny. The Saxon chronicler gives this epitome of his reign :<sup>1</sup> 'In his days each right fell, and each unright for God and for world uprose. God's churches he brought low, and the bishoprics and the abbacies, whose elders fell in his days, all he either sold with fee or in his own hand held, or set to gavel; for that he would be the heir of each man, ordained and lay. And so on the day that he fell, he had in his own hand the archbishopric of Canterbury, and the bishopric of Winchester and of Salisbury, and eleven abbacies all set to gavel. . . . He was hateful to all his people, and an adversary to God. He departed in the midst of his unrighteousness without repentance or satisfaction.'

The accession of Henry I. removed the worst of these evils. The same chronicles<sup>2</sup> which record the misdeeds of Rufus, say of Henry: 'Good man he was, and mickle awe was of him. Durst no man misdo with other in his time. Peace he made for man and deer.' In him men saw a sovereign born to an English king on English soil, wedded to a lady of royal English descent. He was chosen by the Witan at Winchester in the old Saxon

<sup>1</sup> *Saxon Chron.*, 1100, from Freeman, ch. xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

fashion when Rufus was buried. ‘As soon as he buried was, the Witan that near at hand was his brother Henry to king chose.’ He straightway set forth that charter upon which Magna Charta itself professed to have its basis. Its terms are generally described as a restoration of the laws of King Edward, with such modifications as the Conqueror had introduced.

The bishoprics were now filled up, and at the king’s warm invitation Anselm returned to his see, landing at Dover after an absence of about three years.<sup>1</sup> But the new ideas of ecclesiastical domination created fresh difficulties, and Anselm soon left England once more to seek support at Rome.

It has been seen<sup>2</sup> that he had received investiture at the hands of Rufus without scruple. His subsequent residence at the Papal Court had now made the whole investiture controversy familiar to him. The decree of 1080,<sup>3</sup> and the whole subsequent action of the papacy, were now before him, and his firmness was once more put to a severe trial. The question was at once raised when he had audience of the king, who required him, according to ancient custom, to do homage for his see, and to receive his archbishopric from the royal hand. Anselm at once declined, alleging that what he had learned in Rome interposed an invincible obstacle. Henry was much disturbed. ‘It seemed to him a grave matter to lose the investiture of churches and the homage of prelates. Grave also it was should Anselm leave the kingdom while his own power was scarcely established. In the one case he seemed to lose half his kingdom: in the other Anselm might join his brother Robert in Normandy and make terms with him.’ So

<sup>1</sup> Ellis, *Orig. Letters*, iii. i. 11.

<sup>2</sup> See page 175.

<sup>3</sup> See page 167.



the king took refuge in delay, and tried what could be done with the pope. The pope, as might have been foreseen, was polite but uncompromising in his reply. The papal law had been declared—a pope may temporise, but he never recedes. So Paschal II. replied that ‘illegal marriage is but adultery. An adulterous Church is that which has not been lawfully married. The Church alone, not the lay power, can marry the bishop to his Church, for he, according to the law of Scripture, is its husband. Therefore let no Christian king pollute his mother Church by irregular espousals.’ The argument was strange, but those who might have been able to gainsay it accepted the doctrine; and at any rate what was intended was sufficiently clear. Henry conducted the controversy with more temper and judgment than his brother had done; but his policy was the same; he would not allow the royal prerogative as it had been exercised by his predecessors to be diminished. So the time came when Anselm, with the acquiescence of the king, embarked once more on his journey to Rome, sailing from Dover in April 1103. He arrived at the Papal Court to find Henry’s ambassador there before him. The same William of Warelwast who had been employed by Rufus was sent on this embassy also. But on the main point the pope was inexorable. Thus the negotiations dragged on until at length ecclesiastical persistence was too much, as in those ages it always was, for the temporising civil power, which had no principle and nothing but a shifting policy for its support. So the day came at last when Henry consented to a compromise. Anselm returned to England, and a great council was held in the royal palace at London. There was still a party who wished the king to maintain the custom of his ancestors. But Henry, in the presence

of Anselm, decreed that 'from that time no one should receive investiture of bishopric or abbacy from king or any lay hand by presentation of pastoral staff or ring.' Anselm on his part promised 'that no one elected to a prelacy should fail to be consecrated by reason of homage done to the king.' This last had been forbidden by Pope Urban. Thus the articles of peace were signed, and the war of investitures ceased to rage early in August 1106.

Henry also promised no longer to nominate to bishoprics, but to grant a *congé d'élire* to the cathedral chapters. How illusory this elective right has been, and how the kings of England, with or without legal sanction, have known how to control the chapters, need scarcely here be said. A very similar compromise was effected a few years afterwards between the pope and the Emperor Henry V. In the English case it was done at the cost of not much more than negotiation and expenditure of money at the Papal Court. In the Imperial contest many a battle had been lost and won, and many thousands of lives had been sacrificed before the claims of the pope and the emperor could be adjusted. If we ask what Henry had really lost, it may be replied that in the judgment of Hallam<sup>1</sup> the retention of the feudal sovereignty was no equivalent for that which was abandoned. For the bishops were now made dependent on the see of Rome for their investiture into their spiritual authority. If this were withheld, in vain would be the temporal estates which the sovereign might confer. If this were granted, the essence of power had been conveyed, and to withhold the temporalities of the see would be of little avail, and indeed scarcely possible.

Anselm returned to England on the adjustment of

<sup>1</sup> *Mid. Ages*, ch. vii.

this dispute, and in 1109 closed his stormy archiepiscopate in peace and honour. There is little of general interest attached to his administration beyond the facts already set forth. He was the first thoroughly Papal archbishop of Canterbury; the first Primate of England who carried an appeal against his own sovereign. He subjected the English Church to the Hildebrandine legislation. Having found it as free as a national Church could then be, he left it at the feet of the Roman Pontiff, as subsequent sovereigns discovered when it was too late.

Henry I. survived Anselm many years, during which there was no material change in ecclesiastical affairs, except one most significant sign of the advance of papal encroachments on the independence of the English Church, namely, the new position assumed by the legates of the pope. 'Previously to the latter part of the tenth age, papal legates had been sent not frequently and upon special occasions.'<sup>1</sup> In Saxon times they had scarcely found admission into England, the chief instance being the presence of such a functionary at Cloveshoo, when the question of the Lichfield archbishopric was settled. But when the Hildebrandine legislation called into life the principles of the Pseudo-Isidorian decretals, the movements of these emissaries became more frequent and more menacing to local authority whether ecclesiastical or civil. Where they appeared, they assumed to bring with them the supreme authority of the pope, and to take precedence of metropolitans themselves. Nothing could well be more galling to an archbishop's just feelings of dignity, than thus to find a foreigner, who might be merely a deacon, superseding his authority and claiming the privilege of

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Mid. Ages*, ch. vii.



living in luxury at his expense. In the latter days of Henry I., one of the earliest of these assaults was made on the English Church. In his more vigorous days Henry would have found means to resist the encroachment. But it was an omen of greater troubles yet to come, when in 1125 the papal legate, John of Crema, presided at a synod held at Westminster in the presence of the episcopacy of England.

Subsequent ages became more accustomed to these assumptions, but the novelty and strangeness of the occurrence are plainly marked by the tone of Gervase, a monk at Canterbury in the next generation. ‘This legate,’ says he, ‘held a Council at Westminster, and put the whole kingdom into great indignation. For there might you have seen a sight hitherto unknown to the realm of England—a clerk, who had attained no higher grade than that of the priesthood, seated aloft on a throne, and presiding over the whole assembly; over archbishops, bishops, abbots, and the whole of the nobility of England; while they, occupying a lower position, composed their countenances and bridled their lips, like men dependent on his nod.’ Gervase also speaks of the legate officiating at high mass on Easter-day instead of the archbishop and with his insignia; ‘an occurrence,’ he says, ‘which deeply wounded and scandalised the minds of many persons.’ Nothing could more clearly indicate, not only the novelty of the occurrence, but also how much the liberty of the ancient realm of England was now violated. William, archbishop of Canterbury, not only submitted to this, but afterwards procured a bull assigning to himself the position of ‘legate of the Apostolic see’ in England.

If this could be done in the reign of such a sovereign as Henry I., it may be seen that the precedent was



established, the foreign usurpation owned, and it may be imagined what domination might be exercised over a weaker king and a more disunited people.

The sceptre passed from the vigorous hands of Henry to a man personally brave and generous, but entirely unfitted to rule in stormy times. We may again permit the chronicler to describe Stephen in the old English idiom.<sup>1</sup> 'The traitors understood that he mild man was, soft and good, and no justice did. In this king's time was all unpeace, and evil and robbery. . . The land was full of castle-works, and when the castles were made, they filled them with devils and evil men. They were the days when wretched men starved of hunger, when some lived on alms that were sometime rich men, and some fled out of the land. In those days the earth bare no corn, for the land was all foredone by such deeds, and men said openly that Christ slept and his saints.'

In such days the regal authority was utterly shaken, and papal jurisdiction found a more assured entrance. Stephen stooped to describe himself in a charter,<sup>2</sup> as 'confirmed in his kingdom by Innocent, Pontiff of the Holy Roman See.'

Again a legate presided in an English council, and Theobald, then archbishop of Canterbury, and Henry of Blois bishop of Winchester, intrigued against each other for the privilege of being resident legate in England. Theobald ultimately prevailed. The result was 'bitter disputes, suits, and appeals on either side, the like to which were hitherto unknown. Lawyers and pleaders were now for the first time called into England.'<sup>3</sup> Theobald had also been abbot of Bec, and naturally,

<sup>1</sup> As given by Freeman, 252, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Freeman, ch. xxiii.

<sup>3</sup> Gervase of Canterbury.

like his more famous predecessor Anselm, had not the English sentiment of independence.

In the disastrous reign of Stephen, and with the archbishopric of Theobald, the papal domination over the English Church was definitely consummated, as the history of the next archbishop, Thomas-a-Becket, seems to demonstrate.

To this age, and indeed in great measure to Archbishop Theobald, must be assigned the rise in England of two new and allied subjects for study: the civil and the canon law. The importance of these in their bearing on all future history calls for some delay.

The Roman law, chiefly known from the code of Theodosius, the last sovereign of the undivided Roman Empire at the close of the fourth century, had never lost its sway in the great cities of the south of France and of Italy. But in the twelfth century the study of the more perfect and scientific code of Justinian arose in Italy. This has been attributed to the discovery of a copy of the Pandects of Justinian at Amalfi, in 1135. However this may be, the study of the works of Justinian's great lawyers was about that time revived.

The schools of Italy,<sup>1</sup> preeminently those of Bologna, attracted students from all parts of Europe. Thenceforward the Justinian code of the civil law prevailed over a large part of Europe, and at this day forms the basis of the more modern codes which rule in the jurisprudence of the Continent.

Archbishop Theobald is said to have been the means of introducing the new study into England. Vacarius, a teacher from Bologna, lectured upon it at Oxford.<sup>2</sup> Although he was at first interrupted, the civil law maintained its ground in the universities, as a subject of

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Med. Ages*, chap. ix. 2.    <sup>2</sup> Gervase; Blackstone, *Introd.*, 1.

study through the Middle Ages, and to graduate in it became one of the recognised academical distinctions. But the new system was unable to supersede the older English law. There had gradually grown up, partly as the inheritance from Saxon times, partly from subsequent changes, a mass of usages, precedents, and judicial decisions, which regulated the succession to property and the various civil and criminal questions which are brought before courts of justice. This is known as the 'Common law of England.' It was able victoriously to maintain its ground against the intrusive Civil law.

The Roman or Civil law might regulate the proceedings of the Court of Admiralty, of Ecclesiastical Courts and some special tribunals, but in the King's Bench and the great national courts the Common law reigns supreme. It is, as Blackstone styles it, 'a collection of unwritten maxims and customs,' 'handed down by tradition, use, and experience,' and set forth in the judicial dicta of the Supreme Courts of England for centuries past. It is, therefore, unscientific in arrangement, and little adapted for academical study. Whereas the Civil law, digested into carefully arranged sections and setting out from fundamental principles, was susceptible of that abstract treatment which the mediæval universities recognised.

Hence, strange as it may seem, English law formed no part of the studies in English universities, and to graduate in law implied no necessary acquaintance with the Common or Statute Law of the realm. The Civil law, which assumed its form amidst the unbridled despotism of Constantinople in the sixth century, however preferable in some respects to the confused mazes of the Common law, was rejected with a wise instinct



by our forefathers. The Common law has nurtured the liberties of Englishmen. With all its defects, its roots lie in the wild soil of Saxon freedom, and not in the enclosures of Imperial autocracy. The declaration of the Parliament of Richard II. was the sentiment of all good Englishmen:—‘The realm of England hath never been unto this hour, neither by the consent of our lord the king and the lords of Parliament shall it ever be, ruled or governed by the Civil law.’<sup>1</sup>

But a more formidable invader than the Civil law found entrance into England by the means, or at least in the time, of Archbishop Theobald. The Canon law was a necessary consequence of the recent developments of the papal power. Where the authority of a sovereign goes, there of necessity his law must go. If the pope now was permitted to exercise power in England in a manner unknown to former ages, the papal Canon law could not be excluded. It was in this age that it received new form and coherence, and at this time that it was admitted into English courts, and was first studied by English scholars. Thenceforward the canonists became a potent and formidable body, and in the universities the two codes of Civil and of Canon law were jointly read, until Henry VIII. forbade lectures in Cambridge (and probably in Oxford), on the Canon law, as well as conferring degrees in that faculty. Since that time degrees in Canon law have been disused in England.

A treatise on the Canon law would be out of place, but its importance in subsequent history calls for some account of its gradual development, and ultimate consolidation. A slight sketch has been already given<sup>2</sup> of its growth up to, and in the time of, Hildebrand.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Ric. II., Blackstone, *Introd.*

<sup>2</sup> Page 144.



About the same time (the middle of the twelfth century) that the study of the Civil law received such a stimulus in the schools of Italy, from whence it spread through Europe, a collection of the Canon law was put forth by Gratian. This work, generally known as the 'Decretum' of Gratian, speedily became the leading authority, and was the text-book for the study of canonists. It may be briefly described as adopting the spurious decretals of Isidore, and the additions of the age of Hildebrand.

But not content with this it adopted the contributions of Hildebrand's successors, and carried to a greater height the doctrine of the absolutism of the Papacy. But Gratian's work was added to by subsequent collections<sup>1</sup> and digests in little more than another century, and under the authority of later popes the Canon law received many modifications. The result of all this labour, this codification of false and genuine papal decrees, may now be briefly stated. The germinal principle may be found in the false decretals. The pope is universal bishop. As this idea was expanded, the pope had become in the thirteenth century the 'Vicar of God' or 'of Christ.' The bishops were nothing but vicars of the pope. The pope, as king, exercised supreme authority everywhere. The bishop was merely his delegate, enjoying a power limited by his commission. Councils might indeed be consulted, but since the pope was the sole source of legislative power, law could not bind him, while he could dispense with law. He could also absolve from oaths. It was thus that the papal power in its full development threw the mediæval nations of Europe into confusion. No right and no law was certain. The appointment to bishoprics or to any benefice of value might at any moment be claimed

<sup>1</sup> See Gieseler, iii. 158.

at Rome. A bishop's jurisdiction was always liable to intrusion or appeal or reversal.

The taxation of every benefice, as part of the pontiff-king's dominion, was pressed in its harshest form. The power of dispensing with any canonical obligation, and with testamentary arrangements, threw open the doors to chicanery and dishonesty. When these powers were exercised by intruding legates, whose commissions gave them the right of universal interference—when offices were opened in the capitals of Europe for the transaction of all this papal business, and the subordinate officials were found even in the remotest districts—when the Roman 'Curia,' the central body of papal ministers charged with the details of this pervading power, became known as venal oppressors—then Europe, and above all England, drank the cup of degradation to the dregs. The cry of the oppressed went up. The indignation of the Protestant, who reads of these things and vents his feelings in some measured epithets of disgust, is tame by the side of the outcry of many who were the victims of the system, and whose outburst of anger remains on record. Why, then, did such tyranny endure? Because, though some perceived that a large part of it was usurpation, yet the vast majority conceived it to be only the abuse of a rightful power, and never dreamed that the whole Roman fabric was a falsehood.

The Reformation, with its subsequent convulsions, has freed the nations of Europe from the incubus. Not only the Protestant powers, but the Roman Catholic sovereigns, have shaken off the domination of the Canon law. It affects them now only indirectly through its claims on the conscience of their subjects. But its authority has been repudiated, insomuch that the late

Pope Pius IX. complained that there was not now a Christian nation in Europe ; that is, not one which is willing to admit the Roman Canon law, to submit to its behests and enforce its decisions. Thus and thus only is it that the taxing authority and the persecuting canons sleep. No European nation, except in a most modified sense, will now consent to be the agent of the pope, and enforce his statutes by the civil power. Roman Catholics little know what they owe to the Reformation as a means of deliverance, and Protestants are too ready ungratefully to forget it, because the shattered fabric of the Papacy alone remains.

The Canon law, then, must be regarded as a code of slavery. No emphasis is needed to point the remark that the divines and lawyers trained in such a system may well have become what the Roman canonists have been. When it is further considered that these laws are based on a substructure of forgery, misquotation of councils, and false history, the condition of those who learned to rely upon them may be imagined.

The study of the Canon and Civil law became a prominent department in the universities, and the chief road to preferment among the leading ecclesiastics. The great churchmen who were the chancellors and statesmen of the latter period of the papal domination in England were thus rather great civilians and canonists than great divines. This brought its own retribution, for it was one great reason for the inability of the Roman Church to meet the terrible onslaught made upon it by the theological learning and vigour of the early Reformers.

Thus in the Canon law may be seen the formidable weapon which had been gradually forged, tempered, and sharpened for the defence of the Papal Supremacy



in Church and State. Even in its more blunted and immature forms it had been able to smite heavy blows at regal and national independence. But from the days of the Decretum of Gratian, to say nothing of subsequent accretions, down to the present epoch of papal allocutions and the Syllabus, all European states have found the Canon law claiming to override their native legislation, their customs, and their policy. In modern times a system of *concordats*, in which the pope and the state by mutual concessions have arranged terms of truce, has enabled continental governments to live in some tolerable harmony with the ecclesiastical authorities; but it has always been at the cost of conceding some amount of repressive power to be available at the call of the Church. And wherever England has had to deal with powerful sections of the Roman Catholic Church, as in Ireland and in Lower Canada, it is the claim of the Canon law to supersede her legislation which has lain at the root of a large part of her difficulties.

Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury not only introduced the study of this system of Church law into England, but he was also in great measure the means of bringing forward the man who was soon to make England know what that law required. Thomas of London, as Gervase calls him—Thomas-a-Becket as he is known in ordinary history—had already distinguished himself as the possessor of great and varied abilities, when about the age of twenty-four he was introduced into the household of archbishop Theobald. The archbishop employed him in some delicate and difficult negotiations with the Court of Rome, and enabled him to pursue his legal studies at Bologna under no less a personage than Gratian. Thus moulded into a strong



canonist, Becket was appointed archdeacon of Canterbury, and held many other valuable preferments in England. He afterwards became chancellor to the new king, Henry II., and was for some few years the principal agent in peace and war of that able monarch. He was only in deacon's orders, but he was enriched by his manifold Church preferments; and contemporary writers<sup>1</sup> are unwearied in describing the profusion of wealth and magnificence which he delighted in displaying, as chancellor of the realm, as ambassador to the French king, or as leading his troops to the onset. 'Munificent<sup>2</sup> was he above all requirements,' says his faithful Herbert of Bosham; 'bountiful above all, magnificent in array beyond other men, great in person, great in all his equipments. There was nothing about him which was not grand, nothing but magnificence.'

With his aid England was reduced to a state of tranquillity from the turbulence in which Stephen had left it, and justice was administered as well as that age understood its claims. About a year after the death of Archbishop Theobald in 1161, through the urgency of Henry, the Chapter of Canterbury elected Becket to the vacant see. The new archbishop had scarcely felt the mitre secure on his brow before his impetuous nature urged him along the path of ecclesiastical ambition, which his learning in the Canon law opened out before him. The subordination of National law to the law of the Church is a fundamental principle with the canonist.

Omitting other phases of the struggle with the royal power, it may be well to fix the attention on that which became the central point of the contest, and which so remained until the Eighth Henry at last wrested it from the weakened hands of the clergy. This was the prin-

<sup>1</sup> See Fitzstephen, 199-201, ed. Giles.      <sup>2</sup> Herbert of Bosham, ii. 11.

ciple of the Canon law, that all ecclesiastics were exempt from secular jurisdiction. An ecclesiastic might be seized red-handed with his murdered victim lying before him, but no civil court might presume to touch his sacred person. He must be delivered to the custody of his bishop, and no secular magistrate might enquire how the Church was pleased to deal with its erring servant.

It was in defence of this monstrous exemption that Becket was brought into open conflict with the king and nobility of England, and it may be added, with a large part of the episcopate.

Henry had succeeded in reducing England once more under the reign of law. The murders and robberies which were the legacy of Stephen's anarchical days had been stayed by the strong hand of justice. But there were numerous offenders who claimed exemption from the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate. There were not a few delinquent priests, but below them was a multitude in some sort appertaining to the Church—porters, sextons, and others, set apart by some grade of the minor orders, claiming the privilege of clergy, over whom the Canon law held its sheltering shield of exemption. It was not merely irregularity of life (Henry was not the man to regard matters of morality), but it was absolute ruffianism and outrage which were laid to the charge of men claiming the clerical character. One writer says that more than a hundred murders had been committed by them since Henry had received the crown. Be this as it may, Becket's own supporters speak in unmeasured language of these curses to the clerical ranks. 'Workmen<sup>1</sup> of the devil, in name clergymen, but belonging to Satan, perpetrators of enormous crimes,

<sup>1</sup> Herbert, iii. 17.

violators of the peace.' Henry called a council at Westminster, 1163, and proposed to the leading prelates that convicted offenders of this class should be degraded from their orders and handed over to the civil power. The bishops were for the most part ready to accept so reasonable a solution. But Becket saw that it was a concession to the State, which tended to break down the principle of the Canon law. If one jurisdiction should in any degree yield to the other, it should be rather the State to the Church than the Church to the State. The archbishop took his stand. His watchword henceforth was 'The Franchises of Holy Church,' and the struggle between him and the justly irritated monarch became defined and envenomed.

Whatever passion was imported into the controversy, there is nothing with which the modern conscience will not heartily sympathise in the dignified appeal of Henry as reported by Becket's warmest partisan, Edward Grim.<sup>1</sup>

'I have sworn to maintain justice and peace in the realm committed to me, and to condemn wrongdoers by just judgment according to their deserts. Hitherto I have done this, and I would do it if the archbishop did not vex us and the kingdom with his obstinacy. He protects with his authority murderers, thieves, and sacrilegious persons. He supports the enemies of justice, he offers peace to those who break the peace of the realm. Justly do we prosecute clerks, than whom greater villains can scarcely be found. He draws forth and frees from public custody guilty men, and under threat of interdict he prevents my court from doing justice. What is my kingdom worth if the laws of justice perish? Yet they do perish if I shall spare these

<sup>1</sup> Grim, *Vita S. T.*, 35.



men. Let clerks be given over to the executive power, let them be deprived of their orders, and be subjected to penalties according to the laws.'

The reply of the archbishop shall be equally given in the words of his faithful friend, Herbert of Bosham.

'My lord the king, holy Church, the mother of all, both kings and priests, hath two kings, two laws, two jurisdictions, two coercions. Two kings, Christ the heavenly king, and the earthly king; two laws, human and divine; two jurisdictions, sacerdotal and legal; two coercions, spiritual and corporal. Lo, here are two swords. It is enough saith the Lord. Those called clergy by reason of their office have Christ alone for their king. They are sealed to him by the character imposed on their head. By the privilege of their office and order they are not subject but superior to earthly kings. The king hath no jurisdiction over them, but they are rather the judges of kings. Contemptible and unwarlike they may be, yet as a great king and prophet said of them, they bind the kings of the nations in chains and the nobles of the world in fetters of iron. Therefore they are not subject to the kings of the world, but to their own king, the King of heaven; they are ruled by their own law, and if transgressors, they are punished by their own law, which hath its own modes of coercion. Shameful were it that the hands consecrated to God, which had lately held forth on the altar the image of the crucified King and Saviour, now tied behind the back should serve as the figure of the robber—and that the head imbued with the sacred unction should hang upon the vile gallows—the head of him before whose feet the royal majesty itself had bent seeking grace and pardon.'

The reader has both before him, the royal sense of



justice, and the sublime nonsense of the archbishop. Both are given from the report of the archbishop's friends, and they 'go before unto judgment.' The issue is clear and cannot be mistaken.

For a time Becket was supported by the bishops of his province, but his extreme violence and the severe and determined tone of Henry alarmed them, and they fell off from him.

In this stage of the proceedings Becket found himself isolated to a degree which made him waver. The pope himself, to whom the support of Henry was peculiarly valuable, counselled a compromise;<sup>1</sup> the leading English bishops were unwilling to follow the archbishop, and Henry obtained a promise from Becket that he would conform to the usages of England and the ancient royal constitutions. The king now summoned<sup>2</sup> a council of the chief prelates and nobles of the kingdom at his manor of Clarendon, near Salisbury. This council met in 1164, and drew up, under sixteen heads, an adjustment of the relations of Church and State. These ordinances, generally known as the *Constitutions of Clarendon*, claimed to be a re-vindication of the original principles of English law and usage before they had been contravened by the novelties of the Canon law. The following is perhaps as accurate an epitome of some of the chief of these Constitutions as brevity will permit :—

1. Questions as to the right of presentation to churches should be settled in the king's courts.

3. Clerks accused of crime should answer in the king's court for whatever that court should rule to be within its jurisdiction, and if convicted the Church should not protect them.

4. The prelates should not leave the kingdom with-

<sup>1</sup> Grim, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> R. Wendover, A.D. 1164.

out royal license, or without giving security, at the king's pleasure, that in their absence they should abstain from any act injurious to the kingdom.

7. None of the king's feudatories or servants should be excommunicated without due consultation with the king, or his chief justiciary, in order to keep intact the jurisdiction of the royal courts.

8. Appeals should lie in the following order :—From the archdeacon to the bishop, then to the archbishop, who might be compelled to act in the cause by royal mandate. No further appeal should proceed without consent of the king,

11. The prelates should hold their estates as barons of the realm on the same footing and under the same conditions as other barons.

12. The king should receive the revenues of vacant bishoprics or abbacies. In filling up such vacancies, the king's recommendation should be made, and the election held in the king's chapel with his consent and in the presence of his advisers. The prelate elect should at once do homage and fealty to the king.

16. The sons of rustics should not be ordained without their lord's permission.

A century had scarcely elapsed since similar distinctions had been laid down by the Conqueror and accepted by Lanfranc; but two or three generations trained in the Canon law severed the days of Henry II. from those of William by a vast interval of thought and practice. The Constitutions of Clarendon represent simply what the Crown of England held to be its rightful prerogative and true historical footing in the twelfth century. But the weakness or political necessities of the kings of England made them but too generally a dead letter for nearly four centuries more, until the

Eighth Henry finally and indelibly wrote their principles in the Statute Book.

Whatever promise of submission Becket had made to the king he faltered and drew back when this formidable document was submitted to him for his acceptance. At length he yielded ;<sup>1</sup> under what influence, and with what motive, his biographers are not agreed. But in a statement by the Bishop of London, admitted as genuine by some of our best historians,<sup>2</sup> Becket is said thus to have addressed the assembled bishops : ‘ It is God’s will that I should perjure myself ; for the present I submit and incur the guilt of perjury, to repent of it hereafter as best I may.’ Perjure himself he certainly did. He accepted the Constitutions, but assumed the guise of a penitent ; suspended himself from the performance of his ecclesiastical functions, and sought and obtained papal absolution.

The terms of that absolution<sup>3</sup> are singularly politic. The name of the king, or any allusion to any contest with him, is not so much as mentioned. The pope chooses to understand vaguely that ‘ some irregularity had led the archbishop to cease from saying mass.’ He then bids him ‘ consider the difference between a deliberate and voluntary act, and one committed in ignorance, or *from necessity*.’ ‘ If, therefore, you can charge yourself with any act by which your conscience is annoyed, whatever it may be, we advise you to repent thereof, and to confess it to some discreet and prudent priest . . . and we . . . absolve you from what you have done, and by our apostolical authority set you free therefrom.’

Once more Becket was summoned to the king’s presence at a great council held at Northampton.

<sup>1</sup> R. Wendover.    <sup>2</sup> Milman, iii. 454    Robertson, &c.    <sup>3</sup> R. Wendover.



There the bishops and nobles of England openly abandoned his cause. Fearing for his life he fled by night, and ultimately succeeded in crossing the Channel in an open boat, to prosecute the appeal he had made to the decision of the pope himself.

The exile of Becket lasted about six years. His revenues were confiscated to the king's use, but he was enabled to some extent to keep up the state of an archbishop of Canterbury by the liberality of the French monarch and the abbeys which gave him shelter. There are most contradictory accounts given by writers of hagiology about his own personal conduct during his exile. Some depict him as the model saint, groaning in sackcloth and under the lash of the voluntary 'discipline,' mingling his drink with bitter herbs, and feeding on the pulse of the Cistercians, while he gave himself to the study of Scripture. Some of his own friends, on the other hand, reproached him, as one talking of the martyr's crown, yet indulging in delicate viands. John of Salisbury plainly told him that the study of the law or the canons could bring no contrition, and that he had far better study the Psalms or Gregory's Morals. This seems nearer the truth, if he may be judged by all that followed. The pope no doubt wished to temporise. He would not give up any right of the Church, but he did not wish to be forced into a dangerous conflict with the king and nobles of England. He wrote to Becket, 'to strive, without surrendering the liberty of the Church, to recover the goodwill of the king, and to bear with him for a time, hoping that the Lord might give better days.'

But the indomitable spirit of the primate forced the pontiff into more decided measures than he would otherwise have wished to take. Henry, on his part, one of



the ablest statesmen of the time when his passion did not cloud his understanding, used all the resources of diplomacy to obtain a settlement in accordance with his own will, or at least to effect some reasonable compromise. To follow the course of the envenomed controversy would be tedious. Excommunications were hurled at the chief advisers of the king, and there were renewed appeals on both sides to the pope.

Wearied out, at length, the king yielded. How far he consented to revoke the Constitutions of Clarendon is a question which has received very different answers.<sup>1</sup> But there seems rather to have been a tacit consent to a drawn battle, neither party withdrawing his pretensions. Henry consented to be reconciled to Becket, and to sanction his return without conditions, as though those obnoxious laws were not in existence. The primate landed at Sandwich,<sup>2</sup> December 1, 1170. He came full of wrath and defiance, but was saluted with popular enthusiasm. He had to mete out punishment to all who in any way had contributed to his sufferings, had intercepted his revenues, or touched his dignity. The archbishop of York had recently presumed to set the crown by the king's desire on the head of the heir to the kingdom, whom Henry wished to be crowned during his lifetime. Becket pronounced him 'suspended from every office appertaining to his episcopal dignity.' The bishops of London and Salisbury were dealt with in like manner. On Christmas Day, preaching in his cathedral, having wrought the people into frenzy with his impassioned declamation, he concluded his discourse by excommunicating some of his personal foes and the three prelates who had encroached on his rights at the coronation: 'May they be cursed,' said he, 'by Jesus Christ,

<sup>1</sup> Robertson, *Life of Becket*, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> R. Wendover.

and may their memory be blotted out of the assembly of the saints, whoever shall sow hatred and discord between me and my lord the king.'

That which followed is well known. The three suspended prelates presented themselves to Henry in Normandy. In a passion indescribable he pronounced the fatal words, and the four knights went forth on their murderous errand. In a few days that haughty and defiant spirit had wrought out the fearful issue; and on the 29th of December, 1170, the monks were keeping watch over the corpse of the murdered archbishop. Few events have ever left so indelible an impression on any age. Besides all the histories very near to the event, we possess the narrative of four who profess themselves to have witnessed the scene of blood, and of at least six who were at hand, or most nearly connected with the archbishop. Every word and every detail of the horrible story has thus been handed down, and they have been more than once reproduced to our age in masterly narrative.<sup>1</sup> To condense them would take away their graphic force and tragic interest. Enough for us it is to mark the principles at stake. At first, some of those nearest to him were slow to recognise anything which might constitute martyrdom. His rival, the archbishop of York, declared that he had perished, like Pharaoh, in his pride. One of the monks of Canterbury was heard to say<sup>2</sup> that he was deservedly slain for his obstinacy, and was not to be esteemed a martyr. Others said,<sup>3</sup> he wished to be king, and more than king. Others again declared that there was no sign of martyrdom in him; that he was 'full of pride,

<sup>1</sup> See Robertson, *Life of Becket*; Dean Stanley, *Memorials of Canterbury*.

<sup>2</sup> Grim, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Vit. anon. Lambeth*, Giles, ii. 129.

elation, and ambition. He had shown himself cruel and terrible to others, as those well knew who had to deal with him. On such a foundation martyrdom could not stand.'

To us there does not seem one of the principles involved which touches even indirectly what we regard as essential to religion, or belonging to the Gospel of Christ. Yet if we turn for example to the history of the contemporary Gervase of Canterbury, these are the titles which strike our eye on glancing down the page — 'the man of God' — 'this confessor of Christ' — 'this holy man' — 'this champion of Christ.' What was there which could have so wrought not only on the monastic mind, but also on so large a part of the people, as to confuse a struggle for clerical immunities and independence with the cause of Christ Himself? The reasons were partly such as are inherent in the corrupt Christianity which has centred itself in Rome; and partly arose out of the impulses which urged the classes on whom the oppressive feudal yoke pressed so hardly to regard the power of the Church as their only refuge. Among these reasons the foremost place must be given to the latter influence. When the English people closed their multitudes round Becket in his hour of peril at Northampton, or welcomed him on his last approach to London, it was not the saint that aroused their sympathy. They fancied they saw in him the vindicator of liberty for themselves as well as the Church. He was the man who had resisted the dictation of the tyranny which crushed them. They beheld the compact phalanx of king and nobles on the one side. The only power besides was the mighty organisation of the Church which could make even the mail-clad monarch quail. If liberty was yet possible for any but king or noble, it seemed to



the downtrodden that under the shadow of the Church alone it might be found. And so Becket became popular hero, and mighty saint. Yet had he 'wrought no deliverance on the earth;' he had fought for no truth, vindicated no principle of freedom, upheld no doctrine of faith or of intellect. He had maintained the 'liberties of holy Church,' that is clerical power and immunities, and therefore such an age could regard him as dying for Christ, and could elevate him into a foremost place in the saintly hierarchy. Therefore, also, even now, those to whom clerical power seems of the essence of the liberty of the Church are drawn by an attraction of sympathy to this most ambiguous martyr.

Even after this crime it was not the policy of the pope to break with Henry. Becket was canonised; the stories of miracles wrought at his tomb were prodigious, almost beyond experience of human credulity when approached on its most superstitious side. Henry made concessions,<sup>1</sup> the amount of which is variously stated, on the disputed points of the Clarendon Constitutions. To crown all, he performed penance in person with full monastic rigour at Becket's tomb. He passed barefooted, with hair shirt and rough garments, through Canterbury. He lay prostrate on the floor, and kissed the stones which had been embrued with the archbishop's blood. He kissed the tomb, he wept, he prayed. He promised, among other gifts and concessions, forty marks a year in good wax to illuminate the tomb. He bared his back; each bishop and abbot first, and then each of the eighty monks, administered the discipline. Five strokes each prelate inflicted, and three each monk. With what vigour they took advantage of

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs (i. 475) says he renounced them.



the opportunity to clear off old scores on the back of such a monarch is not to be discerned in the ancient narrative. Yet, if the number of the clergy be correctly given, the king must have received nearly 300 stripes, a considerable chastisement, however each flagellant may have shrunk from prominence in the weight of the blows administered. There is ground, in fact, to think that the king was considerably exhausted by these unwonted exercises, which probably satisfied his own superstitious fears, as well as the claims which the Church pressed upon him.

But the result to the fame of St. Thomas was prodigious. In great political extremity the king had made his submission, and returned exhausted and fever-stricken to London. Four days had hardly passed when news arrived that the king of Scotland was his prisoner, and the French fleet which threatened invasion was repelled. Henry seems to have believed, and the age believed, that the appeased martyr had wrought this wonder. Here was a prince who had power with God ! Men worship power, though they may be poor judges of holiness. Thenceforward the pilgrimage to Canterbury was one of the chief in Europe, and the worship of St. Thomas spread on every side. The vanquished king of Scotland recognised the hand which had smitten him, and returning to his land founded a great abbey to his memory. Stout English Protestants who attend their parish church of St. Thomas, fully believing the name to be that of the Apostle, might be scandalised to learn that after all it was that of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

The Roman writers allege that Henry VIII. summoned the dead archbishop to trial on the charge of treason, and on his failure to appear caused him to be judged guilty, and his bones to be burned in public.

The story is probably false<sup>1</sup> in fact, but it is true in sentiment. The turbulent prelate has been arraigned before the bar of public opinion, and outside the circle which still struggles for the supremacy of Canon law his cause is lost. Justice may be done to his courage and many high qualities. It may be recognised that he firmly believed in the justice of the claims which he maintained to the death. But those claims ran counter to the ancient rights of king and people, and though his blood for a time seemed to men to seal and to sanctify them, they have long ceased to have power in England. We may have our strong opinion about the mode of proceeding of Henry VIII. and his commissioners. Our antiquarian tastes may regret many things that were done. But when we read of the six and twenty carts waiting at the door, in 1538, to bear away the rich store of gold and of jewels, and manifold treasures which had accumulated at the shrine of St. Thomas in the four centuries, the conscience must be satisfied that in the main right was done, even if it was done coarsely. And if, as may be hoped and as seems likely, they buried the poor remains of the murdered archbishop quietly and decently where they might await the Great Judgment, even so it was needful to do with that which had been the cause and object of sinful superstition.

In less than six months after the penance of Henry II. the choir of Canterbury Cathedral was once more destroyed by fire. The pointed arches, clustered columns, and foliated capitals of the east end witness to this day the change of style when the heavy Norman work and circular arches of Lanfranc and Anselm gave place to the incoming 'Early English' order of archi-

<sup>1</sup> See Froude, chap. xv.

itecture, whose more matured elegance is traced in the symmetry of Salisbury Cathedral, or the majesty of the nave of Westminster Abbey, both erected in the next century.

During the remainder of the twelfth century no event of conspicuous importance illustrates the history of the Church of England. We may, therefore, note one or two matters of less stirring nature which have left traces to our own time. Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury from 1185 to 1190, acquired the manor of Lambeth by exchange from the bishop of Rochester. From that day to this it has been the principal seat of the archbishops of Canterbury. The existing buildings of the palace range over many centuries. The heavy mass of the gateway is said to have been the work of Cardinal Morton not long before the Reformation. The main part of the residence is due to the present century, while some portions of the pile reach back, perhaps, to the earliest date of its attachment to the see of Canterbury. Another matter of some little interest arises out of the title of one of the western bishops. Wells had been the seat of an ancient Saxon bishopric. About the time when the Normans changed the seat of so many bishoprics after the Conquest, John de Villula, bishop of this diocese, removed to Bath, and assumed his title from that city in the days of Rufus. Hence arose violent dissensions between the monks of Bath and the canons of Wells. These were at length composed in the time of Stephen, when Robert, third bishop of Bath,<sup>1</sup> obtained a decree from Rome that the episcopal see should remain in both churches, but that the name of Bath should have precedence. When the monasteries were destroyed in the time of Henry VIII., the great

<sup>1</sup> *Anglia Sacra*, i. 555.



abbey church of Bath, whose rebuilding was scarcely finished, survived, but it lost its endowments. It was not refounded with Dean and Chapter in Cathedral dignity, but the episcopal title remains as it was settled seven centuries ago.

The close of the twelfth century is the militant era of Canterbury. Archbishop Baldwin, accompanied by Hubert Walter, bishop of Salisbury, joined the Crusade, and in full armour led his men-at-arms under the banner of St. Thomas against the Saracens. He is said to have died of grief at the discomfiture of the Christian arms, and the dissolute manners of the Christian host. He was laid in a Syrian grave, one of the very few archbishops of Canterbury who sleep in a foreign land. The bishop of Salisbury distinguished himself alike as soldier and statesman, in the camp and field, and was sent by Richard as his representative to Saladin, in which capacity he entered Jerusalem, which the lion-hearted king refused to visit, if he might not do so as conqueror.

After the failure of the Crusade, the bishop of Salisbury returned to England, and was recommended by King Richard to the Chapter of Canterbury to fill the vacant see. Archbishop Hubert Walter never forgot his Eastern training, and whether at the head of a military force, or at the council board, he was the leading man in England during the remainder of the reign of Richard and the early portion of that of John. His modern biographer<sup>1</sup> thus sums up his functions: 'He was primate, legate, chief justiciary, chancellor, and king's vicegerent; an accumulation of offices which never centred in any other individual.'

When this martial prelate was laid in his Canterbury

<sup>1</sup> Hook, *Archbishops of Canterbury*, ii. 656.



tomb the fulness of the time of papal domination had come. England learned what the lowest degradation might be for a nation which had admitted into its bosom a foreign law and the representatives of that worst of usurpations, as it is also the most blasphemous—the usurpation of one who calls himself the vicerent of God.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE CULMINATION OF THE PAPAL POWER.

*Kings of England.*

<i>John</i> . . . .	1199—1216		<i>Henry III.</i> . .	1216—1272
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THE thirteenth century is one of great interest to the historical student. It rises to view amidst the misery and degradation of the reign of John (1199—1216). It is base and ignoble during the prolonged incapacity of Henry III. (1216—1272). It closes in the military and civil glories of the greatest of the Plantagenets, Edward I. (1272—1307). Yet in the midst of profound corruption the plant of early English liberty struck its deepest root. The Magna Charta was forced upon the tyrant John, and acknowledged by his weak successor. The excesses of papal power, which must yet be traced, led to its rapid decay. The same century which saw England under the feet of Innocent closed under a monarch who was already able, with the full consent of his people, to raise a barrier of law against some at least of the Roman usurpations.

Innocent III. ascended the papal throne in 1198, and died in the same year with John of England (1216). Whatever claims may have been formulated by other popes, whatever attribute of power may have been asserted for them by any canon law, this pope succeeded in enforcing all. If he were not a judge in feudal matters, said he, yet he was a judge where sin was committed

and where public scandal might arise. The modern politician may smile, and politely ignore the feeble iteration of the maxim by Innocent's successor; but this pope demanded an authoritative voice by virtue of this comprehensive dictum in whatever matter of state policy he chose to interfere. For in which of these may not sin be detected or scandal be feared? The Kings<sup>1</sup> of Castile and Portugal were directed to limit their military enterprises. The King of Arragon was enjoined to improve the currency of his realm. The King of France, after a sharp struggle, was compelled to submit in the matter of a matrimonial offence. A usurper of Norway was excommunicated. The Kings of Hungary and of Leon were coerced. This was the pontiff with whom John of England entered into the unequal struggle which must now engage attention. The first step in the history may well be the appointment of an illustrious Englishman, Stephen Langton, to the see of Canterbury. He had displayed varied erudition at the University of Paris, and, having been invited to Rome by Innocent, was raised to the dignity of a cardinal. The great crusading Archbishop of Canterbury, Hubert Walter, died in 1205, and the succession led to serious disputes, which Innocent terminated in a characteristic manner by nominating and consecrating to the vacant dignity, in 1207, his friend Cardinal Langton. This was a measure unprecedented as yet in the English Church. It set aside the royal prerogative as well as all established law and usage, and it was met by John with the utmost defiance. The pope<sup>2</sup> threatened to place England under an interdict, which, after various negotiations, was proclaimed March 23, 1208. According to the mediæval idea of an interdict all public religious ceremonies were to cease, and

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Med. Ages*, ch. vii.

<sup>2</sup> R. of Wendover, *in ann.* 1207.

in a great measure this was actually the case. But a portion of the clergy disobeyed the papal prohibition, and the king sequestrated<sup>1</sup> the property of those who conformed to it. John, however, was seriously alarmed, and negotiations were re-opened with the papal court, but without practical result. In this position of affairs the pope used the last weapon in his armoury. He pronounced the King of England contumacious and deposed, and called on the nations of Europe to take up a crusade<sup>2</sup> against the excommunicated sovereign. Philip Augustus of France was to be the leader of the invasion; and in a council at Soissons, April 8, 1213, it was agreed that the exploit of William the Conqueror should be repeated. At this crisis John made his submission, and delivered to Pandulph, the pope's envoy, his charter of homage to the papal see. The blasphemous as well as lying and shameful words of John's submission run thus :<sup>3</sup>—

‘ We, impelled by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and not by force or from fear of the interdict, but of our own free will and consent, and by the general advice of our barons, assign and grant to God, and His holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to the holy Church of Rome our mother, and to our lord Pope Innocent and his successors, the whole kingdom of England and the whole kingdom of Ireland, with all their rights and appurtenances . . . and henceforth we retain and hold those countries from him and the Church of Rome as vicegerent . . . And we will and determine that the Church of Rome shall, besides the Peter's pence, receive annually a thousand marks sterling money, for all service and custom we owe them.’

Nearly seven centuries have passed, yet even now an Englishman cannot read this most base surrender

<sup>1</sup> R. of Wendover, in *ann.* 1208.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1212.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1213.



without shame. But pope and king knew each other, and understood the pact. The crusade was dissolved by the pope, and the king consented to receive Langton as archbishop. In July 1213, five years after his consecration, that prelate<sup>1</sup> landed at Dover, and the formalities of absolving the king and removing the interdict were in due time performed. It might be expected, under these circumstances, that Archbishop Langton might play the part of a mere papal partisan. It is at least an unexpected result that in political affairs he should prove himself a patriot who had no small share in laying anew the foundations of English liberty, though pope and king were arrayed against him.

From the moment of his landing the new archbishop had shown an unlooked-for spirit of independence. Without waiting for the removal of the interdict he had received the king, and celebrated high mass in the Cathedral of Winchester. In the tedious negotiations for withdrawing the interdict, which chiefly related to the heavy pecuniary demands made by the pope on the Church and kingdom of England, the archbishop sided with the oppressed clergy. His personal dignity, and that of the whole episcopacy, was violated by the extortion and arrogance of the papal legate who was conducting the negotiations. This functionary<sup>2</sup> kept a stately court, and travelled with a great retinue, at the expense of the English Church. He assumed power to degrade, to suspend, to promote the clergy at his will. The archbishop placed himself at the head of the indignant and outraged prelates, and an appeal was made to Rome itself against these disastrous proceedings. But Pandulph was there, on the part of the legate,<sup>3</sup> to vouch that John was of all kings 'most

<sup>1</sup> R. of Wendover, *in ann.* 1213.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1214.

humble and moderate,' and that Langton, from mere avarice, was resisting the pious king. And so at last the humiliating terms were settled, large payments were made to Rome, and more were promised. The detested John stood before his people as the beloved son of the pope, the soldier of the cross, inviolable in person, and secure against European invaders, at liberty to work out his own tyrannical will.

It was well that men should thus be gradually disabused of their error in deeming the elevation of the papal power to be any remedy against the oppression which weighed upon them at home. The very bitterness of the cup which the pope forced to their lips might well instil a doubt as to the sweetness of the fountain which had been so fondly credited and blindly sought.

Archbishop Langton may now be seen allying himself with the leading barons of England in searching for some footing of legality amidst this great morass of usurpation. This they found in certain charters<sup>1</sup> of Henry I. and Henry II., which at least recognised some considerable portion of the ancient Saxon liberties, and restrained some of the excesses of feudal power. On this basis the barons of England united in a confederacy, of which Archbishop Langton and William Earl of Pembroke were the leading spirits, to force upon the king the acceptance of a charter which should guarantee the liberties of the English people. June 15, 1215, is a landmark in English history. On that day the king sullenly yielded to the dictation of the confederate nobles, and affixed his seal to *MAGNA CHARTA*. But there was still a year of misery for the country. John collected bands of mercenaries

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Med. Ages*, ch. viii. 2; R. of Wendover, *in ann.* 1214.

from the Continent, who committed fearful devastations.

The great Charter itself was received with indignation at Rome, and annulled by papal bulls. John, said these documents, was a subject and tributary of the sovereign pontiff; he had sworn fealty to the pope; he had taken the cross—all confederacies against him were forbidden under pain of excommunication—therefore this confederacy was an audacious wickedness. ‘We altogether reprobate and condemn the Charter,’—‘We altogether quash the Charter and pronounce it void.’ The archbishop, who had gone to Rome to attempt a juster settlement, was suspended from his office, and excommunication<sup>1</sup> was proclaimed against all ‘the disturbers of the king and kingdom of England.’

This is one of those passages in the shameful history of the papacy which must ever tax the utmost hardihood of its supporters, or be more readily dealt with by dexterous silence. Many other tyrants have found some one who has attempted to vindicate their memory. John has found none. Yet Innocent’s ‘well-beloved son in Christ, John, the illustrious king of England,’ received the papal blessing while his mercenaries were spreading lust and rapine over the country. ‘The whole surface of the earth,’ says the contemporary chronicler,<sup>2</sup> was covered with these limbs of the devil, like locusts, who assembled from remote regions to blot out everything from the face of the land: they ransacked towns, houses, cemeteries, churches, sparing neither women nor children.’ Meanwhile the patriot archbishop was detained in Roman exile, and the cause of English liberty pronounced accursed.

But that cause has lived under the special protection

<sup>1</sup> R. of Wendover, *in ann.* 1215.

<sup>2</sup> R. of Wendover.



of a Providence which foreknew the work to which the nation was called. And in the judgment of our chief constitutional authorities the great Charter<sup>1</sup> is 'the keystone of English liberty'—and 'if every subsequent law were swept away, there would still remain the bold features which distinguish a free from a despotic monarchy.' Or, as Blackstone expresses it, 'it protected every individual of the nation in the free enjoyment of his life, his liberty, and his property, unless declared to be forfeited by the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land.'

Death found John at last at Newark on one of his expeditions, after terrible ravages in the eastern counties. His last words were: 'To God and St. Wulfstan I commend my soul.' This sufficed to procure him honourable sepulture in Worcester Cathedral, where he still lies in kingly state, though the ashes of many of England's great ones have been scattered to the winds. The chronicler has recorded his crimes. His ideas of the justice of the Almighty, and the atonement which might avail for sinful man, may be given in these instructive words: 'It is confidently to be hoped that some good works, which he performed in this life, may plead in his favour at the tribunal of Jesus Christ; for he founded a monastery of the Cistercian order at Beaulieu, and when dying gave to the monastery of Croxton land worth ten pounds.'

The shattered arches of Beaulieu stand now among the flowers of a garden by the margin of Southampton Water. It can be no mere Puritan reaction, it must be an emotion of the simplest justice, which gazes on their desolation with satisfaction mingled with the natural regret over faded beauty. The base tyrant who bid

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, ch. viii. 2.



those graceful arches to rise must meet the Eternal Justice. It is not written in *THE BOOK*—it is not written in the conscience of man—that the deft work of the mason, the rich acres of endowment, shall atone for crime, though there a thousand monks should chant their service for ever.

The pope and ‘his well-beloved son, John,’ died in the year 1216, but Archbishop Langton was not free to return until May 1218, when he procured the confirmation of the great Charter in the name of the young king Henry, and retired from political struggles.

The inglorious reign of Henry III. occupies a large part of the remaining portion of the thirteenth century. In ecclesiastical affairs England remained during this period very much as John had left it. Subjected to the intrusion of foreign ecclesiastics and drained of money by papal exactions, it was to learn what the supremacy of the pope really meant.

How England suffered and was already learning to resist in those days may best be inferred, not from the suspected narrative of some modern Protestant, but from the indignant pen of Matthew Paris, monk of St. Albans, the contemporary chronicler. The great papal extortioner, as the reign of Henry III. advanced, was an emissary named Martin, of whom what the clergy and people thought in 1245 may be judged from the narrative of the monk. ‘The oft-mentioned Master Martin, the pope’s clerk, was most watchfully and unceasingly busying himself in collecting revenues in any way he pleased for the use of the pope, and in bestowing them on the pope’s relations. But of his daring and injurious rapacity I think it more honourable and safer, out of respect to the holy Roman Church, to be silent than to offend the ears of my audience, and to disturb the mind

of Christians by the relation of such things.' Nevertheless the dealings of Master Martin and his many extortions are noted often and clearly enough in the pages of the patriotic monk, who gives a graphic account of the final exit of the extortioner from the kingdom, when at last even Henry III. was aroused by the universal indignation. FitzWarren was commissioned by the irritated nobles and commons to face the enemy. Entering his lodgings in the Temple, and 'eyeing the clerk with a scowling brow, he addressed him thus: Depart and leave England immediately.' Dreadful threats and oaths followed this abrupt command. Master Martin 'immediately went, breathless with alarm, to the king,' to know how matters stood. The king declared that he had found difficulty in restraining his barons from tearing him limb from limb, and added, on his own part, some most plain and unroyal curses. Master Martin could but ask for a safe-conduct out of the realm. Entrusted to the charge of one Robert Norris, the papal delegate trembles when any passenger appears on the road, and in some harmless woodcutters discerns those who are lying in wait for his blood. Master Martin promises any benefice or promotion Norris may desire for any relative, if he will but protect him. Norris plays on his fears, and professing that he has with difficulty restrained the woodmen, says to his trembling charge: 'Now let us walk stealthily and cautiously, lest anything worse happen to you; but, when you set sail, if you are a wise man you will never return.' So Master Martin rejoiced when he had put the sea between himself and the scene of his plunder, but 'he left his foul traces behind him,' for a commissioner was appointed to exercise his powers. When Master Martin came to the pope and told his griefs, 'his holiness' (it is

the monk who speaks) ‘ground his teeth and broke into a violent rage.’ Recalling other acts of opposition from minor princes, ‘he said in a voice smothered with vehement rage, and with a scowling brow, and with wrinkled nostrils: “It is expedient for us to settle matters with your king, in order to crush these petty princes who are kicking against us; for when the dragon is crushed or pacified, the little serpents will be easily trodden under foot.”’ The pope was to hear more of Master Martin, for English deputies were commissioned to present to him a letter in which the papal encroachments and the misdoings of that official were complained of. Nothing could be more dutiful than the tone of that letter, nevertheless it declared that the people of England ‘could not endure with patience these said oppressions, detestable alike to God and man; and by God’s grace they would no longer endure them.’ However, no redress was obtained, and the English deputies ‘departed in great anger, swearing with a terrible oath that they would never satisfy the ever detestable avarice of the Romans by paying the tribute, neither would they allow it to be paid.’ The retort of the pope was in fact a mandate to the bishops of England to affix their ‘seals to that detestable Charter of the tribute which King John of unhappy memory had made.’ This they did, Fulk, Bishop of London, having the modicum of praise from the patriotic monk that he was the last to seal. That ignominious tribute was eating into the heart of the nation, and even King Henry, when he heard of this renewed submission of his bishops, ‘swore that he would never, as long as he drew the breath of life, pay tribute to the Roman Court.’

It was but the momentary passion of a weak nature. In the following year, 1246, renewed efforts were



made in letters from the king, the abbots, and the nobles and people of England, to obtain redress. The most interesting of these is one to which the name of the famous Simon de Montfort, with others, is affixed : ‘ Reverend father, “ chariot of Israel, and its charioteer,” we confidently resort to the asylum of your affection . . . to apply a salutary remedy to the burdens, injuries, and oppressions on the kingdom of England and our lord the king . . . since it will be necessary for us, unless the king and kingdom are soon released from the oppressions, to oppose ourselves as a wall for the house of the Lord, and for the liberty of the kingdom. . . And your holiness may rest assured that, unless the aforesaid matters are speedily reformed by you, there will be fear that such peril may impend over the Roman Church, as well as our lord the king, that it will not be easy to apply a remedy to the same ; which God forbid.’

These letters, breathing in some measure the English spirit, will suffice to illustrate the rising tempest ; but they were no more than incidents in the long struggle against papal exactions, the end of which was yet far off.

The mission of two legates *a latere* from the papal court during this reign requires notice, and the more because they tended yet further to produce among the clergy of England that anti-papal jealousy which, though varying in its heat, was never extinct. This spirit was one among many other causes which tended to make their opposition less determined when the Eighth Henry finally cast off the papal jurisdiction. Henry III., led by his foreign advisers, unable to obtain a subsidy from his clergy, applied to the pope for the means to coerce them. The pope selected Otho ‘ the White,’ a cardinal of some eminence, to visit England



on this errand. The king met him on his landing,<sup>1</sup> and 'bowed till his chin almost touched his knee.' Gifts were poured upon the legate, and the churches and abbeys where he passed were half-ruined by the expenditure. At last came the dreary November day, a London November, when the great synod was gathered in St. Paul's. Astrologers had prognosticated evil, and tempests raged over the city for fifteen days. The English climate, at its very worst, put on its most sullen aspect as the cardinal passed on, amid the murmurings of the people. On a platform in the nave the legate sat enthroned, the two archbishops on either hand. The cardinal 'lifted up his voice like a trumpet,' and addressed the synod from Revelation iv. 6: 'In the midst of the throne and round about it were four beasts.' These were the bishops ever vigilant. Then the papal canons were proclaimed. Pluralities, before the Reformation, and long afterwards, were the great bane of the Church of England. An honest attempt on the part of the pope to reform this abuse would have been a praiseworthy use of his power. But that power was only exercised to heap preferments on his friends, or to extort payment for the license to hold such pluralities. It was this which the indignant prelates now heard in the thirteenth of these canons: pluralities should not be held without dispensation from the pope. What this meant the bishops knew well. It meant heavy fees to the papal treasury; or, yet worse, it meant forced surrender of rich preferments, which would pass for the most part into the hands of foreigners. If any sentiment of independence, if any feeling of patriotism remained which could be kindled into animation, such fears might well fan the flame. Walter de Cantilupe, Bishop of Wor-

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, *ann.* 1237.

cester, rose to protest. He was of noble birth, and, like his kinsman of Hereford, who attained the honour of sanctity and great veneration in the Welsh Marches, was devout and even ascetic. He took off his mitre and said that ‘many of the prelates of England were men of high birth. They had been wont, by holding many benefices, to maintain their dignity, to show generous hospitality, and to be prodigal in alms-deeds. Some were old; they would not consent to be robbed of their income, and reduced to ignominious poverty. Some were young and bold, and could endure a hard struggle before they would surrender their rights. For myself, before I was a bishop, I made a firm resolution not to be so plundered. I adhere to my resolution. Let the pope reconsider this, and be more wisely counselled.’ The excitement was so great that the legate was overawed and withdrew the canon. If we are to understand that the offences forbidden by some other canons of this council were really prevalent in England, they may well raise some reflection. Churches must not remain unconsecrated. Idiots, illiterates, and other incapable persons, were not to be ordained. Livings might not be held by deacons, nor might they be seized or held by force. The clergy should not dress unbecomingly, like laymen, or even in military attire. The clergy to a considerable extent lived with women ‘in matrimony or otherwise.’ Other misdemeanours were specified. The legacy of Otho the White bore little fruit, except that by his rapacity, extortion, and ostentation, the clergy and people of England were yet more widely alienated from the papacy. During this time Edmund Rich was Archbishop of Canterbury (1234–1240). He had attempted in vain, even at the cost of a journey to Rome, to maintain the violated dignity of his see.

The legate, in deacon's orders only, had been supported by the king against the primate, and Edmund now resigned his see. He retired to the French abbey of Pontigny, which had sheltered his predecessors, Thomas-à-Becket and Stephen Langton, and there 'sank into a saint,' as Dean Milman so happily words it. He speedily died, worn out by austerities which his enfeebled frame was little able to bear. The rumour of miracles at his tomb at Pontigny soon spread abroad, and the pope, at first averse, yielded the honours of canonisation to the archbishop, thenceforward the object of pilgrimage, as St. Edmund of Pontigny, until the French Revolution wrecked his shrine.

To St. Edmund succeeded one of the most anomalous primates who have ever sat in the marble chair of Canterbury. Boniface of the princely family of Savoy, more a soldier than a priest, was thrust on the English Church, which he oppressed for many years, by the united influence of Queen Eleanor and the pope. One of the maddest scenes on record in English ecclesiastical history is the visitation of the Priory of St. Bartholomew, now the illustrious hospital in Smithfield. Conscientious of the feeling against him the primate came with armour under his vestments, and with armed retinue. The sub-prior protested against the archbishop's right as visitor, an office which pertained to the Bishop of London. The scene can only be further described in the language of the chronicler of St. Alban's.<sup>1</sup> 'The archbishop burst into a fit of anger, and, rushing on the sub-prior, impiously inflicted a blow with his fist on this holy priest, and cruelly repeated his blows many times on his aged breast, venerable face, and hoary head, exclaiming, "Thus will I deal with you English

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, *in ann.* 1250.



traitors ;” then with unmentionable oaths he called for a sword. The rich vestment of the sub-prior was torn and trampled under foot, and its jewelled clasp was lost. The archbishop, unsatiated, crushed the sub-prior against the woodwork of the stalls. Meanwhile the followers of Boniface struck, wounded, and trampled upon the trembling canons. Bruised and bleeding the canons brought their complaint to the Bishop of London, their official visitor. “The king is at Westminster, go to him,” replied the bishop. Four of the canons, all who could move, went to the king with their torn garments and bruised persons. The sub-prior never recovered from the effect of the blows of his most reverend assailant. The king refused even to see the canons, but the people rose in tumult, and pursued the primate with loud cries of anger to his house at Lambeth.’ But no redress could be had, and therefore ‘with pitiable complaints they intrusted their cause to St. Bartholomew, whom they served continually night and day, and prayed that God, the Lord of vengeance, as man either could not or would not, would deign to punish such great offences.’

It may be granted that an additional drop of gall was put into the pen of a St. Alban’s writer, by the fact that Boniface proceeded to violate the privileges of that great abbey ; but after all allowances on this score the story is horribly instructive.

During these turbulent scenes Fulk Basset, a member of one of the most noble of the Norman families, held the bishopric of London 1244–1259. A renewed papal demand for a large subsidy to be levied on every benefice in England drew forth from him the indignant reply,<sup>1</sup> ‘Before I submit the Church to such slavery I

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, *ann.* 1255.



will lay my head on the block.' The king, with his wonted unkingliness, threatened him with the papal censure. 'The pope and the king,' replied the baron, 'may illegally combine to take away my bishopric: they may strip me of my mitre, I shall still wear my helmet.'

Such strife as this may render very intelligible the combination of whatever was noble or patriotic in Church or State under the leadership of Simon de Montfort against the foreign tyranny to which the unworthy Henry lent himself. Civil history must tell the career of that illustrious warrior and statesman who was one of the chief founders of English freedom.

But it is for us to say that again the papal wrath was kindled against the patriots of England. Cardinal Ottoboni was sent with full powers against the confederate barons and prelates. The clergy who supported the barons were to be expelled,<sup>1</sup> and papal followers thrust into their places; the chief nobles and bishops were to be excommunicated. There was even to be a crusade against rebellious England. 'Nothing could be done unless that turbulent man of sin (de Montfort) and all his race were plucked out of the realm.' But the battle of Evesham was fought, and Simon fell. The popular love canonized him, as it did many a name far less worthy in the Middle Ages. The pope might curse but the people blessed. He was compared in song to the martyred Becket. He died, 'the flower of soldierhood,' 'the protector of the English nation.' 'Pray for us, blessed Simon,' said the popular invocation, 'that we may be worthy of the promises of Christ.' The tide was speedily turned by the accession of the greatest of English kings,

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, *ann.* 1267.

Edward I., who, though Simon's opponent, had been formed by the hard discipline of those contests to know his countrymen and to understand what power lay in English patriotism; else it might almost have been that a profusion<sup>1</sup> of miracles at Simon's tomb and popular frenzy might have forced the canonisation of de Montfort from some reluctant pope.

The metrical chronicle known by the name of Robert of Gloucester indicates plainly that, in spite of papal denunciation, marks even of monastic sanctity were believed to have been found on the person of this famous warrior:—

But among all the rest, the most pitiful thing was this,  
That Sir Simon, the old man, they dismembered so,  
For Sir William Maltravers, thanks have he none,  
Cut off his feet and hands, and his limbs many a one;  
And his head smote they off and to Wigemore it sent,  
To dame Maud de Mortimer, who most sorely abused it;  
And although they hacked him limb from limb, he bled not, as was  
said,  
And the hard hair-cloth was the garment next his body:  
Such was the murder of Evesham, for battle it was none,  
And therewith Jesu Christ was very ill pleased,  
As He showed by tokens terrible and true;  
For as it to Himself befel, when He died on the cross,  
There was a great darkness throughout all the world.

The legate Ottoboni entered England at this crisis, and found it for the moment under his feet. At the Christmas<sup>2</sup> festival the legate sat above the king and was served before him amid indignant murmurs, some of those strange echoes which in the course of ages have resounded through that ancient Westminster hall.

In the waning years of that king, in 1268, Cardinal Ottoboni held another synod<sup>3</sup> in St. Paul's, worthy of

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, *ann.* 1265.

<sup>2</sup> Milman, *Rishanger*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*.

notice inasmuch as the canons then enacted were, until the Reformation, the chief code of ecclesiastical law in England. To a great extent they were a re-enactment of the constitutions of the synod held a few years before under Cardinal Otho, and are open to much the same remarks. They are commonly referred to as the Laws or Constitutions of Ottoboni.

There were churchmen of some repute in England during the dreary reign of Henry III. beside those already mentioned. The name most prominent in ecclesiastical history is that of Robert Grostête, or Great-head, Bishop of Lincoln. As a theologian he was addicted to the extreme form of papal theology and law as it then prevailed. As a man and an administrator he was pure in morals and aim beyond his contemporaries. He was a friend of the famous Roger Bacon, and like him a member of a mendicant order. His learning and integrity were of European fame.

Appointed to the great see of Lincoln, he attempted not only to deal with the grosser forms of clerical and monastic vice and corruption which he found prevailing there, but he was brought face to face with the abuses of patronage which king and pope alike committed.

It was thus that Grostête, full of the most implicit reverence for the papal office as magnified by the Canon Law, found himself in unexpected collision with Innocent IV., the pope. One of the extravagant claims, which already was bearing the papal power heavily downwards, and of which more will be heard in another reign, was the assertion of the pope's right to nominate whom he would to benefices not yet vacant. Thus foreigners who could not speak the English tongue, and were frequently non-resident, held a large proportion of the best endowments in England.



Omitting other details of the determined resistance which Grostête opposed to this gross perversion of right, it may suffice to give one instance. The bishop received a mandate from Rome directing him to confer the first canonry which should be vacant in Lincoln Cathedral on a youthful nephew of the pope, Frederick of Louvain. Innocent had met with previous opposition in matters of this kind from the constant bishop. Now he threatened excommunication against anyone who should resist his mandate. But Grostête remained firm. His letter to the pope has been quoted by many historians. ‘I<sup>1</sup> devoutly and reverently obey the apostolic mandates with filial affection. But I oppose those things which are contrary to apostolic decrees. For these must be the doctrines of the Apostles, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself, of whom the pope represents the type and person. For our Lord Jesus Christ himself says, “He that is not with me is against me,” and against him the sanctity of the Apostolic See is not and cannot be. The tenor of the aforesaid letter (of the pope) is not consonant with apostolic sanctity, but utterly dissonant and discordant thereunto. It is the sin of Anti-Christ to destroy souls by defrauding them of the office and ministry of their pastors. The most holy Apostolic See, to which all power has been given for edification, not for destruction, cannot incline to or enjoin so hateful and pernicious a sin. No faithful subject of that see can obey such mandates or precepts. Therefore, my reverend lord, by virtue of the obedience and fidelity due to the most holy Apostolic See, and out of regard for my union with it in the body of Christ, in filial affection and obedience, I refuse to obey, I oppose and resist the orders in the aforesaid letters, because they most evidently tend to an

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, *in ann.* 1253.



abominable sin against Christ, and to the destruction of man. They are opposed to the sanctity of the Apostolic See, and are contrary to the Catholic faith.'

It may be imagined with what wrath such a reply was received. 'Who is this old dotard,' cried the pope, 'who is audacious enough to judge our acts? By St. Peter and St. Paul, if we were not restrained by our generosity, we would make him a fable, an astonishment, an example, a warning to the world. Is not the King of England our vassal, our slave? Would he not at a sign from us throw this bishop into prison, and reduce him to the lowest disgrace?' But wiser counsels prevailed. The cardinals urged upon him that France and England knew the learning, the devout and pure life, of this eminent prelate. The scandals of patronage were already becoming perilous, and the pope relaxed his pretensions. Grostête died in 1253. It was believed in that age that Innocent had resolved on the disinterment and dishonour of his remains, and that the great prelate himself appeared to him in vision denouncing his vices, and threatening him with that miserable death which speedily followed.

It has been natural that Grostête should be prominently noticed by Protestant writers. Though he doubted no Roman doctrine, yet he was a man who resisted wrong where he saw it. When after years perceived, what he discerned not, that it was not merely an abuse of a sacred power which pressed upon men, as Grostête deemed, but that the power itself was a falsehood and a wrong—then, and not till then, did reformation come. Hugh of Lincoln, his predecessor, Edmund of Canterbury, his contemporary, might be canonized for their ascetic renown; but the learned, devout, and just Robert Grostête, of Lincoln, was fol-

lowed by no such honours as these. Sorely troubled was this just man by the abuses which he could not remedy. In his last illness he discussed this perplexity with some of the clergy who were in attendance. The pope seemed to him to be acting the part of Antichrist, by his unholy traffic in livings, thus trifling with men's souls. Other popes, his predecessors, had granted privileges and rights of preferment, which this pope had swept away by his letters of provisions. The pope defended his practice by saying, 'Equals cannot bind each other. I am equal to my predecessors. They cannot bind me.' It was a sore puzzle to the dying prelate. He solved it thus: 'Those still in the perils of the world, and those safe in harbour, are not equal. A departed pontiff is greater than a living one. Several apostolic pontiffs have confirmed the privileges now endangered. Are not the many who have been saved by divine grace more than the solitary one who is still in danger?' Thus helplessly struggled devout and pure minds in those days, entangled in the meshes of that fatal theory of papal supremacy, unable 'to deliver their souls, and say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"'

'Thus,<sup>1</sup> therefore, departed from the exile of this world, which he had never loved, the holy Robert, Bishop of Lincoln. During his life he had rebuked pope and king; he had corrected prelates and reformed monks; in him the priests lost a director, scholars a supporter, the people a preacher. He was hospitable and liberal; cheerful and affable at the table; devout, contrite, and penitent in the divine services; as a bishop he was sedulous, venerable, and indefatigable.'

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, in *ann.* 1253.

But he was not a saint as saints were measured in that age.

When he died, says our monastic informant, sounds like those of a great convent bell melodiously ringing were heard by wayfarers, though no bell was near. Men knew afterwards that it was 'the very time when Robert, Bishop of Lincoln, breathed forth his happy spirit.'

Thus the troubled years passed on. 'Righteous souls' were vexed by the sore bondage, and were unable to see the light. At last the vacillating and feeble Henry III. was laid in that tomb which yet remains within the glorious monument of that inglorious reign, the Westminster Church, with which he replaced the building of one equally weak and equally subject to foreign unpatriotic influence, whose name he gave to his noble son—Edward. With him passed away the reproach and degradation of England, and the papal despotism speedily found itself in the face of a greater power, the laws and liberties of a determined people.

## CHAPTER IX.

## MEDIÆVAL INSTITUTIONS.

THE period comprised in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, lately traversed in these pages, gave birth to institutions which have largely moulded the subsequent centuries. These institutions will, therefore, require a somewhat detailed notice. A separate chapter devoted to their consideration will least interrupt the due historical sequence of events. The rise of universities and of the mendicant orders will especially demand attention. Both of these belong to the period in question, and no words are needed to point out their importance.

Claims of remote antiquity have been made for some of the most renowned seats of learning, but it is exceedingly difficult, or rather impossible, for the most part, to trace for them a continuous history. The life of Lanfranc<sup>1</sup> will illustrate the earlier condition of the schools of Europe. Where a great teacher chose his residence large numbers of students speedily flocked around him. But it by no means followed that a permanent seat of learning should be the result of his labours. Paris<sup>2</sup> was one of the first to attain this historical position. From the early part of the twelfth century it can trace the undisputed existence of its great schools, and even before that time individual

<sup>1</sup> See page 161.

<sup>2</sup> Hallam, *Mid. Ages*, ix. 2.



teachers are said to have read lectures there. Salerno may have been still older, especially as a school of medicine, and Bologna, whatever its claims to antiquity, stands historically on much the same ground with Paris. The earliest charter which the university of Paris possessed was from Philip Augustus in the year 1199. Bologna was recognised by the Emperor Frederic Barbarossa in 1158, and thenceforward universities were endowed with special privileges and exemptions alike by sovereigns and by popes. Practically speaking, therefore, the latter half of the twelfth century, and the beginning of the thirteenth, is the age of the commencement of the recognised privileges and historical existence of universities. This alone would mark a turning-point in the civilisation and culture of Europe. Such, undoubtedly, with all its troubles, is the era which witnessed the gradual subsidence of the Crusades, and the development of commerce and learning.

The very title University (*Universitas*), as we apply it, is due to this age. Its more general mediæval use, derived from Roman law, had been nearly equivalent to a guild or corporation. We may read of a 'university of tailors' as well as of scholars. There might be a 'university of jurists' and a 'university of students in arts' in the same place. But henceforward the name gradually assumed the sense to which we are accustomed. In England may be traced a movement strictly parallel to that on the Continent. Whatever ground either of our famous universities may have for citing the names of Saxon sovereigns in their commemoration of benefactors, it seems clear that they are unable to prove a continuous existence before the twelfth century. Wood, the antiquarian, asserts that

in 1201 Oxford contained 3,000 scholars. However this may be, King John<sup>1</sup> is said to have conferred upon this university its earliest charters. Others name a charter of Henry III. (1244) as its earliest charter of privileges, and another of that monarch (1231) as the earliest for Cambridge. It is sufficiently manifest that their legal existence has run very parallel from the first. The earliest collegiate foundations in Oxford are those of University, Balliol, and Merton Colleges, all within the thirteenth century. Only one college in Cambridge, that of St. Peter, possesses the same antiquity. But in both universities several very ancient institutions have been merged in more recent foundations, and, therefore, have lost their continuous individual existence. For instance, St. John's College, Cambridge, which dates from about 1511, absorbed an older hospitium founded about 1210. The great College of Trinity, Cambridge, dating in its present form from Henry VIII., stands on the ground of several far more ancient halls. It was in connection with these new communities of learning that the remarkable theologians known as the *schoolmen*, or *scholastic divines*, arose. Theology, as taught by them, was based upon a system of logic derived from Aristotle who reigned supreme in all the schools of learning. The dialectics of Aristotle were deemed the highest subject of study. If there had been any care to lay a basis of fact for the exercise of this skill, the consequences might have been different. If the critical study of the grammar of languages had been applied to develope the meaning of Holy Scripture; if the facts of history had been investigated; in a word, if these acute reasoners had made sure of their premisses, it is not too much to say

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Med. Ages*, ix. 2.

that the history of the world would have been different. But it was far otherwise. The Bible had been so handled for centuries that mystic meanings imposed on every part had made it cease to speak plain sense and clear doctrine. History was so vague that the false decretals were held to be the voice of early pontiffs; the donation of Constantine was esteemed a historical fact, and its record an authentic document. Logic applied to principles such as these, and working from falsehood or visionary interpretation as its base, could lead to nothing but systems of falsehood or of learned trifling. Thus in the mediæval universities it might almost be said, in the prophet's words, 'none was searching for truth.' Not that they consciously and wilfully departed from the truth. They either dared not examine their premisses, which it was heresy and death to doubt, or else without hesitation they assumed them. Thus the minds of greatest acuteness were led on in darkness. The most subtle logic, building its distinctions and reasonings on false history and false interpretation, fashioned that marvellous edifice, mediæval Roman theology. That theology reigns still and by the same methods. The decretals themselves have long passed away, even with Roman divines, into the gulf where all forgeries must lie. But their principles are still assumed, and men even of high modern culture are found to embrace them without any exhaustive examination, and having embraced them, speedily find themselves able to go the whole length of the Papal claims which rest upon them. That a large amount of absolute infidelity lay hidden in those days behind such academical reasonings is certain. How far some of those acute intellects faithfully received, or with cynical scorn silently accepted, the ecclesiastical dogmas which



served as the basis of their logical deductions can be known to none but to the Omniscient.

It was by men of this type that the current theology was fashioned into a system. For example, transubstantiation by this time reigned supreme throughout Europe. The schoolmen shaped it into dogmatic coherence. But the grounds on which this dogma had obtained such general acceptance were scarcely theological, much less Scriptural or philosophical. William of Malmesbury, monk and historian, writing in the time of Rufus, no doubt gives the true account of the grounds of his belief when he says in his account of Berengar<sup>1</sup>:—‘We, indeed, believe that after the benediction of the priest, those mysteries become the very body and blood of the Saviour. We are induced to such an opinion by the authority of the ancient Church, and by many miracles recently manifested, such as Paschasius relates to have taken place in Germany when the priest Plegild visibly touched the form of a boy upon the altar, and after kissing him, partook of him turned into the similitude of bread, after the custom of the Church. Such too is that concerning the Jewish boy, who by chance running into a church with a Christian boy of the same age saw a child torn to pieces on the altar and distributed to the people. When with childish innocence he related this to his parents, they placed him in a furnace where the fire was burning and the door closed. From thence after many hours he was snatched by the Christians without injury to his person, clothes, or hair. Being asked how he could escape the devouring flames, he replied—“That beautiful woman whom I saw sitting in the chair, whose son was divided among the people, always stood

<sup>1</sup> William of Malmes., *in ann.* 1087.



at my right hand in the furnace, keeping off the flames with her garments.”’ Such were the stories on which the popular belief in transubstantiation fed and grew. Just so the belief in purgatory rested mainly in its origin on dreams and visions of visits to its ghastly realms by cataleptic persons. The schoolmen shaped both one and the other belief into coherent dogma. But the philosophical explanation of transubstantiation was their master-piece. The distinctions between the substance and the accidents of matter were refinements on which a subtle intellect could base endless theories. Thus they proved to their satisfaction that the ignorant superstition of the previous centuries might be fashioned into a philosophy. Though taste, smell, size, colour, consistence had suffered no change, these were but a veil and did not reach the substance of the consecrated bread. The substance was after all not composed of the accidents, the substance was no less than the whole glorified humanity of the Lord Jesus.

The scholastic system prevailed in the universities until the Reformation. Dean Milman<sup>1</sup> has well described its aim, its methods, and its results in these words. It was the theology of ‘the disputant, bound by conventional scientific forms, with a tendency to degenerate from a severe investigation of truth into a trial of technical skill. In its highest tone, however ingenious, acute, and subtle, it presented every question in every possible form; it was comprehensive so as to embrace the most puerile and frivolous, as well as the most momentous and majestic enquiries: if dry, wearisome, unawakening in its form, as litigation, and as a strife of contending minds, it became of intense interest.

<sup>1</sup> *Latin Christianity*, viii, 5.

It was the intellectual tournament of a small intellectual aristocracy, to which all the scholars who were bred to more peaceful avocations thronged in multitudes.'

Among the scholastic divines Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus stand pre-eminent for the influence they have had over the human mind. To the purpose of this work it rather belongs to name such as sprang from the English Church. Of these Alexander of Hales, a monastery near Winchcombe in Gloucestershire, is the chief. He is said to have studied at Oxford, but the great scene of his theological career was Paris, where he attained the highest reputation, and the proud title of *the Irrefragable Doctor*: Duns Scotus, and Bonaventura were among his pupils. He died in 1245.

A more illustrious name, in the estimation of those who value science and truth, is that of Roger Bacon (1214–1292). He is often named among the scholastics, but was not of them. Their methods were not his, nor did he aim at their results. He was the forerunner of his great namesake in perceiving that the facts of nature itself must be investigated by one who would know truth. It was thus that he was far in advance of his age, and anticipated modern discoveries in many things from which that superstitious time was unable and unwilling to profit. He was the most truly illustrious son of Oxford in that age.

The reigns of John and Henry III. in England were the time of a monastic development which requires special notice—the rise of the Mendicant Orders. The history of Monasticism has been from the very first chequered, even beyond the ordinary course of human history, with extremes of lofty aim and deepest abasement. Piety, the most fervid even if misdirected ;

self-denial the most severe, even if mistaken ; corruption and sensuality the grossest ; learning which was the light of the age ; ignorance the most grovelling—these form the strange mingled thread of monastic history as it is followed down from its rise in the fourth century. No reader of original history or mediæval theology can fail to know this. Since the Reformation it has been common to discern that an institution which severs itself from the very basis of society laid down by the Almighty Himself when He made man, is fundamentally unsound, and cannot fail to breed corruption. Before the Reformation men marvelled that so pure and holy a life, as the monastic was deemed, should so perpetually falsify expectation. Popes, councils, bishops, heads of monasteries, from age to age strove to purify these institutions, and strove in vain. It is not, as has been so frequently alleged, mere Protestant controversial rhetoric which has written a factious bill of indictment against the cloistered life. The most unsavoury reading that could well be selected would lie among the charges brought by authority in Saxon and Norman times against a large proportion of the monks and nuns of England. Hence arose a series of attempts at reformation century after century. Sometimes these took the form of enforcing with greater exactness the existing rules of an order. Sometimes the zeal of a sanguine reformer invented new rules and founded a new order.

The rule introduced by Benedict of Nursia in 529 prevailed throughout Europe before the Norman era. To this rule it was the effort of Dunstan and his coadjutors to reduce the irregular monks of England. To this order belonged the more ancient abbeys whose history reached back into those earlier times. St. Albans, Croyland, Westminster, Winchester, Evesham,



Abingdon, Glastonbury, and many more stately and wealthy abbeys were under this ancient rule.

At the great revival of religious fervour in the eleventh century which accompanied the Hildebrandine movement in the Papacy—a movement which rapidly made itself felt throughout Western Europe—it was natural that there should be a rekindling of monastic zeal. If in that age the Crusades carried away the more adventurous spirits, a kindred excitement led to a revival in the monastic life at home. Accordingly about this period several enthusiasts, not satisfied with what seemed the sluggishness of the old Benedictine rule, founded new orders. Among these may be noticed the Carthusians and the Cistercians. The severity of the Carthusian rule is generally known, with its rules of silence, and the hard manual labour which perhaps alone has made its stern life possible. It still survives, though, from its very character it could never have been so numerously followed as some others. It was founded in 1084, and its great seat, La grande Chartreuse, may yet be visited. In England the most familiarly known of the few houses belonging to this order has been that which was founded, long after the period of which we are speaking, just outside the walls of London. Its site and remains, by the munificence of a benefactor in the reign of James I., were dedicated to charity and education. The *Charterhouse* still retains with but slight alteration the name of the *Chartreuse*, which was the original home of its monastic inmates.

The other order which has been named, that of the Cistercians, attained far greater extension. They owed their origin in 1098 to the abbot of Cîteaux (*Cistercium*), whence the name of the order. Dissatisfied with the laxity of his Benedictine brethren, Robert of Molême in



Burgundy withdrew to the retired spot where his famous order rapidly grew into extraordinary fame and opulence. He had, indeed, been preceded in the tenth century by a similar reformer, another Burgundian, Odo abbot of Clugni, from whom proceeded the Cluniac rule. It was a revival of the strictness of the Benedictine order, coupled with some additional regulations, which gave an air of greater sanctity according to the ideas of the age. The revival spread through many monasteries, and the Cluniac rule acquired great celebrity and influence. But the Cistercian changes coinciding with the great ecclesiastical movements of the Norman era attained proportionally great importance. Their rule was that of St. Benedict, but to this were added injunctions of the greatest austerity. Each monastic reformer, observing declensions in the strictness and purity of life among his brethren, conceived the idea that by some additional rules, some stricter observances, he might check the natural working of human corruption. Each in turn was disappointed; the desired result endured no longer than the fervid stimulus of the revival remained. The Cistercians, however, retained that stimulus longer than some others, and hence acquired an extraordinary reputation and spread themselves widely. There have been members of their body to whom, in spite of the differences of creed, men of the most widely varying opinions have been ready to ascribe a saintly character. Pre-eminent among these may be named the great St. Bernard (1091-1153), abbot of Clairvaux. He has been styled by Roman writers the last of the fathers. No man in his age exercised so vast an influence, and his reputation gave the great stimulus to the spread of the Cistercian rule. With regard to England the dates will

speak for themselves. Authorities differ as to the exact numbers, but within the twelfth century (that in which Bernard flourished) there were seventy or eighty Cistercian establishments planted in England, and in the following half century sixteen more. This order, closely following the idea of their first home at Cîteaux, frequently placed their habitations in some lonely wilderness. Hence the lover of picturesque antiquity may still linger among the remains of their magnificent architecture, while the great edifices of the mendicants of whom we have yet to speak, being of necessity seated in towns, have for the most part perished. Few can be more generally known than the stately abbey of Tintern, lying in its once isolated ravine under the cliffs which overhang the tortuous course of the Wye. This was founded for the Cistercians by the great house of de Clare in the days of Henry I., about 1131, though the elegance of the flowing tracery points to a later origin for its magnificent church.

Another of the Cistercian settlements is the equally renowned Fountains Abbey. If less beautiful, yet more perfect in the preservation of some of its domestic arrangements, is Kirkstall; which remains, a strange memorial of the pristine solitude of that now busy valley, almost under the canopy of the smoke of Leeds. In both of these the antiquarian may note the Norman work of the earliest settlers, followed by the more elaborate workmanship of the succeeding centuries.

But with their growing wealth these institutions became rapidly discredited like their predecessors, and when the thirteenth century came it was clear that something else was needed. This, men thought, they had found in the mendicant orders of which we have now to speak. The lists compiled by antiquaries, such

as Dugdale, Tanner, and others, show that after the middle of the thirteenth century scarcely any monasteries of the older orders were founded in England. But in that subsequent period of hospitals and colleges there sprang into existence nearly one hundred, and of the mendicant orders more than two hundred establishments. These numbers sufficiently tell in what direction public opinion was running. It should be added that the mendicant orders had nearly exhausted the munificence of founders before the fourteenth century had run its course. But it is time to speak of their rise and history.

The monastic life hitherto had only indirectly subserved the good of mankind generally. It had, no doubt, fostered the arts and preserved learning to some extent, when otherwise in turbulent and uncivilised communities they might have perished. It had done much for the development of agriculture, and ameliorated the condition of the peasantry on the monastery lands. But its religious principle from the first was isolation and seclusion. And this remained its distinguishing characteristic when wealth and magnificence attended its stately ceremonial. Still 'the Rule' of the Order contemplated the monk in his relation to his own community, and as one cut off from the world.

But the world was rapidly changing. The great movements of the Crusades, the intellectual awakening, the spread of commercial enterprise, the extent to which anti-papal opinions had grown, especially in the south of France, the turbulent population of the great cities—all these produced changes which were now calling for an agency of a different character from the priest who recited his daily mass, or the monk who cared for his own spiritual welfare in the cloister. An agency



demanded by the spirit of an age will commonly appear. The result may ultimately be disappointment, but the attempt will be welcomed. Two men of very different temperament, but with very similar aim, about this time founded the renowned orders of Dominicans and Franciscans. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), an Italian, and Dominic (1170–1221), a Spaniard, conceived, much about the same time, a similar idea. The history of Francis of Assisi, ignorant and fanatical as he was, has its special interest. Omitting the consideration of his strange personal history, and considering only the principle on which he founded his order, it may be said that he saw his way to a great extent through some of the worst mistakes of the original monastic idea. Instead of that most fearful and bewildering, if not maddening practice, as it may well be deemed, of the solitary man without employment or intercourse with others wrestling with the thoughts and temptations which crowd around him, he would have his brethren engaged in constant activity and labour. In his later life he learned to disregard ascetic practices and mortifications, excepting so far as they might be means to an end. In the monastic life they had been viewed as merits in themselves. He taught that activity in winning souls to God, and in going forth to work for the benefit of those for whom Christ died, was the true religious life. In preaching he would have his followers bear in mind all human sympathies, and speak of divine things as men to men. The example<sup>1</sup> of Christ in giving up all that He might teach and labour and die for those whom He would redeem he proposed as the true model. ‘There is only one mark,’ said he to one of his order, ‘by which I can know whether thou art a servant of God; namely, if

<sup>1</sup> Neander, vii. 370.



thou compassionately bringest back wandering brethren to God, and never ceasest to love those who grievously err.' It is not needful to dwell on the more fanciful or grotesque side of such a character. The superstitions of that age have been sufficiently illustrated, and Francis was possessed by them to the full. Nor need the details of the orders founded by him occupy further space. It requires no additional explanation to understand the burst of welcome which principles such as these received throughout western Christendom. Here, at least, was the idea of a Christ-like life, a life of service and of love—a life of self-denial and poverty—not to minister to spiritual pride and conventual fame, but to the good, spiritual and temporal, of those for whom Christ died. Neither, alas! does it need further explanation to understand the melancholy sequel. It is one thing for those whom the Spirit of God has taught to set forth their experience, and to 'let their light shine before men.' It is another thing for a multitude of carnal men, unenlightened by the grace of God, to crowd into a popular order, to wear its dress, to avail themselves of its privileges, and to drag it down into the very mire in which the followers of Francis were grovelling ere two generations had passed. As the papal system cannot exclude the influence of the Spirit of God, which 'bloweth where it listeth,' so also its inveterate corruptions of the truth seem always fatally to mar the permanence of the spiritual work of its best adherents.

The history of Dominic is very different from that of Francis. Still there is this in common between them: Dominic perceived that the wealth and stateliness of the existing orders were a positive bar to their usefulness. He taught by example and precept that the

necessity of the age, especially with a view to the heresies rife among the masses of people in France and elsewhere, was to have men who would go forth amongst men, living as they lived, sharing with the poorest, teaching and preaching wherever they went. If he and his followers were fearfully compromised in the horrors of the Inquisition which reared its fearful form about that time—while this must not be forgotten, neither must it be brought into sole prominence in such an age as that.

How far, even at first, the followers of these men either grasped the idea or fulfilled the intent of their founders, it would be invidious to enquire, and impossible absolutely to determine. What they became, no doubt always with brilliant exceptions, is notorious. They were the reproach and scandal of the Church. Favoured as they were by the popes, they rapidly obtained special privileges. Their organisation was that of an army under the direct control of the general of their order resident at Rome. This constitution made them the ready instruments of papal despotism, since, through their general, the popes could exercise an immediate influence throughout western Europe. They were privileged to preach and hold confessions wherever they went. They were exempted from episcopal jurisdiction. No parochial right could restrain their liberty. They speedily occupied the places of most influence. They were frequently confessors of princes, papal secretaries, counsellors of sovereigns. At the universities they were aiming at predominance. The greatest of the schoolmen were numbered in their orders. At the same time the wandering mendicant preachers, the lowest indulgence-mongers, spread their influence among the populace. If illustration of this declension

be needed, there is no occasion to quote the attacks of the parish clergy or indignant monks of that age ; much less need subsequent Protestant utterances find expression, for the confessions of their own members would suffice. Yet it may be advisable to present the bitter language in which the monk of St. Alban's, known as Matthew Paris,<sup>1</sup> described these novel intruders using the special privileges and exemptions with which the pope had endowed them. \* He tells us that even in the presence of great ecclesiastical dignitaries they would demand permission to preach to the people, 'as being legates and even angels of God.' They would also insolently ask of those they met, 'Have you been confessed?' Answered, 'I have,' they would again ask, 'By whom?' 'By my own priest,' would probably be the answer. 'Who is that idiot,' replied the friar ; 'he has never learned theology, he has never unravelled dark questions. They are blind, and leaders of the blind. Come to us. Confess to us.' The old monk speaks of the confusion and dismay, and consequent immoralities produced in parishes, where the bond of allegiance to the priest was thus rudely violated. One scene he describes in his own great church of St. Alban's, where the archdeacon was presiding at some local council. It may remind us of some of the intrusions of the early Quakers on a congregation of the seventeenth century. One of the friars demanded silence since he was about to preach. 'Conduct yourself more moderately, brother,' replied the archdeacon ; 'wait a little. We simple persons, who are used to old and approved customs, wonder at this sudden innovation, which produces astonishment and alarm.' We need not pursue the scene, for we may refer to one of them-

<sup>1</sup> Matth. Paris, in *ann.* 1246.



selves, the celebrated Franciscan, Bonaventura, who wrote thus,<sup>1</sup> when appointed general of his order only some thirty years after the founder's death, about 1256. 'The danger of the times, the violation of our own consciences, the scandal of worldly people, to whom the order, which should be to them a mirror of holiness, has become an object of contempt and abhorrence, all rouse us to action.' He proceeds to enumerate causes for this bad repute. Cupidity for money, costly buildings, monopolising funeral rites and drawing up wills, the exactions of the itinerant friars.

Thus, then, this dream of perfection ended. Property, repudiated in profession, became possessed in fact, and the religious mendicant sallied forth on his rounds from the gates of the most magnificent edifices, the proud home of his order.

In vain had Francis done his utmost to bind on his brethren the yoke of perpetual poverty. - Amongst his rules may be read:—'I command positively all my brethren that they receive no money in any way directly or indirectly: that they acquire no property, no house, no place, nothing whatever. They shall be as strangers and pilgrims, without shame, for the Lord made Himself poor for us.' He even provided against that fruitful source of laxity, papal indulgence. 'I command all my brethren, upon their obedience, never directly or indirectly to seek any letter from the Roman Curia on any pretext. I charge them to allow no gloss upon my rule, nor to say "such and such was his meaning," but to take my words pure and simple as the Lord gave me to write.'

Nevertheless, a century had not passed before a papal constitution hewed a way out through this barri-

<sup>1</sup> Neander, vii. 390.



cade of words of childlike simplicity. After a long preamble on the merits of poverty, it ruled that, after all, the possession and moderate use of necessary things must be granted to the friars. But that since possession either several or common was denied to them, the property of all goods belonging to the order should be vested in the pope, who grants *the use* of them to the friars. Thus was the will of Francis, as that of all others, set aside by papal authority, the very thing which he had striven to obviate. By this ingenious fiction, which bound the Franciscan yet more closely to the pontiff, the pope and not the friar was lord and owner of the wealth and magnificence of the order, which in its lordly poverty confessed itself only tenant and occupier and not possessor.

The Franciscans were further known as friars minor (*fratres minores*); and the Dominicans as preaching friars (*fratres prædicatores*).

Ultimately, four orders of mendicant friars were recognised by the pope in 1272. The Dominicans, or Black Friars, have left a lingering name in London, near the site of their ancient settlement. Then come the Franciscans, or Grey Friars, whose convent, with its church of cathedral magnificence, was transferred by Edward VI. to his new foundation of Christ's Hospital. The great fire of London swept away the remains of that ancient grandeur, but the good intentions of former generations are fruitful in a charity they had not devised. The Carmelites are less conspicuous in history, though an order of some consequence. They were known as the White Friars, a name which still survives near the Temple, in a turning out of the busy thoroughfare of Fleet Street. Their privileges of sanctuary strangely survived the Reformation itself, and the genius of Sir

Walter Scott has perpetuated the memory of that Alsatia, where the ruffians of the times of James I. were enabled to defy the law in the ancient precincts of Whitefriars.

The Augustinians are chiefly remarkable to the Protestant reader as having numbered in their ranks no less a personage than Martin Luther himself. Their name also yet remains in the City. Austin Friars is now a street, not far from the Bank of England, dedicated to commerce, or, it might almost be said, to speculation. The offices of stock brokers and dealers will most prominently meet the eye of one who, turning out of Broad Street, wanders down the region whence of old the Austin Friars sallied forth on their errand of religious mendicancy.

It may be of some interest to give the numerical notes<sup>1</sup> of religious foundations in England as they have been collected by learned antiquarians. Two hundred and sixty-five foundations are known to have existed in Saxon times. From the reign of William the Conqueror to that of Edward III., inclusive, there were founded of religious houses, 152 Benedictine, 188 Austin Canons, 31 Cluniac, 80 Cistercian, 25 Gilbertine Canons, 34 Præmonstratentian, 97 Alien, 292 hospitals and colleges, 53 Grey Friars, 43 Black Friars, 83 other friars; in all 1,078. It is not pretended that these numbers are exact, for they are somewhat varied by different authors. But it is instructive to notice how rapidly the number dwindles. In the twelfth century 418 monasteries sprang up, in the thirteenth 139, in the fourteenth 23, and in the fifteenth only 3; whilst many (including the alien priories) were suppressed; and of hospitals and colleges about 90 had their origin. During this later period the

<sup>1</sup> Pearson, *Historical Maps of England*, p. 55.

chief enrichments accrued to the religious houses from the increasing custom of founding chantries for saying mass for the founder's soul. This mode of procuring rest for the soul became a constant item in the wills of the wealthier classes. Besides the constantly occurring bequests of certain sums to be expended in the purchase of a number of masses, there were frequently special endowments for perpetual masses for the departed. Hence in our parish churches the number of traces of multiplied altars formerly in existence. Hence also some of the most exquisite works of art in the delicately wrought chapels, which serve to accentuate the arch-spaces in cathedrals, or churches of cathedral grandeur.

If a specimen be desired of such foundations, an extract from the will of the devout Lady Margaret, the mother of Henry VII., may well serve. She was to be laid in the grandest of such chapels, that built by her son at Westminster, where the Tudors lie, with others gathered to them since. So she ordered that<sup>1</sup> 'three perpetual daily masses, with divine service and observances, be daily said by three sad and discreet monks of the said monastery, for the health of our soul perpetually while the world shall endure; and one perpetual brother, called a converse, to be perpetually kept in the same monastery, specially to serve the same monks at their masses, and all other priests that shall say their masses at the altars whereat the said three chantry masses shall be said.' Then comes the question of payment. Devout and true was the Lady Margaret, but it must be owned that in this, as in her other foundations, she somewhat robbed the Church. Neither she nor her

<sup>1</sup> Appendix to Hymer's *Funeral Sermon of Margaret, Countess of Richmond*.



excellent adviser, Bishop Fisher, saw with other eyes than those of their own times.<sup>1</sup> What kings and popes had sanctioned for centuries why should not she deem right? So she proceeded that by 'licence of the said king (Henry VII.) our sovereign lord and dear son, we have given and granted to the abbot, prior, and convent of the said monastery the advowsons of the church of Swineshead in the county of Lincoln, and of the church of Cheshunt in the county of Hertford, then of our patronage. Which parsonages, the abbot, prior, and convent of the same monastery, at their special desire, have accepted and taken at the yearly value of 53*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* over all charges, which be indeed at this day of greater value.' But this was not all: valuable manors were added in order that this and her other foundations might be sufficiently and duly maintained, 'while the world shall endure,' said the Lady Margaret. Her world, the world she had known, had but short endurance. Half a century had not passed when the three masses were silent for ever, and her grandson and great-grandson brought in a new world. But the parsonages or rectorial endowments which she granted away (though she probably was not the first who took them) from Swineshead and Cheshunt, sank into the gulf which received monastic and chantry property. So Swineshead at least remains a poor, bereft vicarage, though that of Cheshunt seems to have been somehow compensated for its loss.

Happily our belief in the covenant mercy does not allow the thought that the Lady Margaret can have suffered loss, or that the divine honour has been injured, because the masses are silent, and the seventy wax lights she ordered year by year on her anniversary

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. XIII.



cast no gleam through the arches of Westminster, else might one who has tasted her bounty, and owes so much to her great foundations in Cambridge, feel some pang of regret that her will had known such brief vitality in that part which was personal to herself. But it has been with her as it has been with so many of the liberal benefactors of old time.

Centuries have passed away. The ever-corroding stream of time has undermined the sandy foundations of much that was stately and seemed enduring as our forefathers beheld it. But what they built on the firmer rock of truth has stood the chafing of the restless tide. The universities dedicated to a higher learning, and owning subjection to the divine truth whose foundations they ever explore and strengthen, have endured. May their twin mottos be fulfilled, and 'the Lord be their light,' while many generations yet draw from them 'light and draughts of holiness.'

## CHAPTER X.

## THE DECLINE OF THE PAPAL POWER.

*Kings of England.*

*Edward I.* . . . 1272—1307. | *Edward II.* . . . 1307—1327.  
*Edward III.* . . . . . 1327—1377.

THE sweet fresh air of freedom was wafted from time to time across the dreary unwholesome period lately traversed. It will invigorate less fitfully that which now awaits consideration. To mark the change which less than a century wrought in the balance of power between the ecclesiastical and civil authority it would suffice to contrast the two popedoms of 1198–1216 and 1294–1303. In the former of these, Innocent III. has been seen dominating over princes, and compelling Philip Augustus of France and John of England to submit to his will. In the second of these, Boniface VIII., after pretensions no less arrogant, was constrained to yield to the haughty resistance of Edward I. and his parliament, and after the ignominy of personal capture by the agents of the French King, Philip the Fair, he died broken-hearted.

It had been found by bitter experience that the Papal See could ally itself to the cause of tyranny and extortion. The illusion had passed away that the great potentate ruling by the Tiber might be regarded as a refuge for the oppressed. On the contrary, as the political review in this chapter will show, and as the history of Wycliffe will further illustrate, the Papal

Court was now popularly regarded as the very home of simony and rapacity. The privileges of the clergy for which Becket died became odious long before they were swept away. As yet there was no shaking of doctrinal foundations, but the cry for a reform which should abate the moral corruption and luxury of the clergy was heard on every side.

The world too was rapidly changing. Learning was lifting up its head, and the universities, now fresh in their early youth, brought a widely-spread intellectual awakening. The Crusades practically closed with the expedition in which Edward I. took a part at the end of his father's reign. Politically and ecclesiastically they were a disastrous failure. But they had drawn nations together. Their vast armaments had tended to organise the science of government, and to develop commercial enterprise. The productions of the East, the lingering arts and learning of the old centres of Christianity, the navigation of the Mediterranean, became familiar in the Northern lands. The lead in commerce fell, indeed, rather to the Italian republics than the Teutonic nations, yet these also participated in the wealth-gathering movement. The cities and chartered towns with their privileges and strong spirit of citizenship were becoming a power. The armed citizens of London, with their riches, their organisation, and their discipline, made themselves felt in the civil contests of the age, and their strength was usually thrown on the side of freedom. At the close of the twelfth century they elected<sup>1</sup> their own mayor, and the name of that officer appears among the signatures to the Great Charter. Indeed, excepting in the vapouring style of chivalry, there never was a time when the

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Constit. Hist.*, i. 630 ; Freeman, chap. xxiv.

wealth of the successful trader failed to exercise its due influence. In Saxon times he who thrice crossed the seas in his own craft was counted worthy of the rank of thane. The great house of de la Pole, which attained the first place among nobles, and in the time of the Tudors was even of royal rank, sprang from merchants in Hull and in London.

Not only were all these elements of national strength gathering might, but yet greater social changes had grown out of the sufferings and struggles of the disastrous period which had closed. Englishmen had learned to trust each other in combination for the public good. The Great Charter was no selfish claim for class privileges; it assured the common principles of freedom. The remarkable movement of which Simon de Montfort was the head in the time of Henry III., was no mere strife of feudal magnates against their sovereign. It was a union of Englishmen in support of national independence and national liberty. The clergy, insulted and impoverished by papal officials, were to a great extent leavened with the same spirit. To a people thus rising in national union, and penetrated by a sentiment of freedom, it pleased Providence to send a sovereign capable of understanding them, and able to lead them. In a happy hour the stately form of Edward I. was enthroned in England. Whatever may be the result of antiquarian discussions as to the origin of parliaments, or however certain their unbroken lineal descent from the meetings of the Saxon Gemotes,<sup>1</sup> yet as organised representative assemblies they trace their history distinctly from the reign of Edward I. Henceforth the great legal changes must be cited not merely as royal grants or charters, or as constitutions

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Mid. Ages*, vii. ch. i. 3; Freeman, xxiv.



of irregularly summoned councils, but as STATUTES OF THE REALM.

So great, indeed, was the constitutional development in the reign of Edward I. that Blackstone<sup>1</sup> says that 'he has been styled our English Justinian.' Sir Matthew Hale does not scruple to affirm, that 'more was done in the first thirteen years of his reign to settle and establish the distributive justice of the kingdom, than in all the ages since that time put together.' Still it is one thing thus to trace the legal recognition of constitutional usages and precedents, and altogether another thing to adjust their exact bearings on the relations of prerogative and popular liberty. It was the work of many centuries before either of these learned their several limits, and before the fruitful germs of principles planted wisely in the soil of the earlier ages ripened into the stately growth of the English Constitution. Neither can it be necessary to enlarge on the manifold inconsistencies of the wisest of these early Plantagenets. There is a tendency in all statesmen to act inconsistently. Their duty is not that of the theorist in his study. Compelled to act promptly and decide rapidly according to the exigency of the moment, they are always tempted, if they have the power, to lean to this party or that, or to strain prerogative, if either seems likely to accomplish the immediate and pressing necessity. In negotiations with the Papal Court this inconsistency may often be marked. The same sovereign may at one time resist any application of papal patronage in his kingdom; at another time he may negotiate with the pope for the appointment of some prelate to a see where he desires to secure the succession

<sup>1</sup> B. iv. c. 33.

of his own nominee against popular or monastic preference.

The great and successful wars of Edward I. conducted to some of the developments which have been mentioned. For an ample supply of money is the first necessity in all great military enterprises. This naturally leads to a strict scrutiny and organisation of the national resources, and the best means of reaching, without exhausting, the revenues of every class in society. As these necessities led to a great enhancement of the powers of the laity by their representatives in Parliament, so also they left indelible traces on the organisation of the assemblies of the clergy. The civil laws of Justinian had conferred great immunities from taxation on the clergy, and the Canon Law had followed up these exemptions. But the estates of the Church comprised so large a portion of the realm of England, that their freedom from public burdens would have been intolerable to the nation. By fair means or foul, by exaction or gift, the kings of England had obtained pecuniary succours from the clergy. Henceforward these contributions were placed on a more legal basis. The era of the early parliaments, which has been under review, is also the era in which the assemblies of the clergy, known as the Houses of Convocation, assumed their historical form.

The idea of a Church assembly is inherent in the very notion, nay the very name, of a Church. Even that theory of the Church which conceives the loosest and least coherent model, the Independent or Congregational system, strives, in spite of its dislocation, to assemble in annual meeting those who find their point of union in the unlimited right of outward marks of disunion. As in the rest of Christendom, so in England,

there has been a series of provincial synods from the very first, in which, according to ancient usage, the archbishop presided.

But to the reign of Edward I. must be referred the origin of that form of these synods which has since been perpetuated under the name of Convocation, and which has played so considerable a part in English history. That form naturally arose out of the principle of self-taxation, which lies at the root of parliamentary representation.

As Edward assembled the representatives of his people in Parliament to grant him subsidies, so also for the same purpose he summoned conventions of the clergy. From this time, therefore, is traced the existence of these ecclesiastical representative bodies having a double character. They were, in regard of the taxation of the clergy for state purposes, civil assemblies. In regard of ecclesiastical business they were synods. The mode of summons partook, accordingly, of this twofold character. From that day to this, when the crown summons a parliament, the royal mandate goes forth to the archbishop directing him to summon the clergy to meet in Convocation.

The exact form of the meeting of Convocation is later than this.<sup>1</sup> It is said to have assumed its permanent shape in 1425 under the presidency of Archbishop Chicheley. The mode of debate and assembly seems before that time to have been variable. By Chicheley's direction the lower clergy retired into a separate room to choose a prolocutor who might serve as their representative and spokesman in their intercourse with the bishops. Since that time this has been the arrangement, and the two houses of Convocation have sat as separate

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Con. Hist.*, ii. 197.



orders. Practically speaking, the historical Convocation has been that of the province of Canterbury. The province of York in the active days of Convocation contained only four members of the episcopacy, and it represented a poor and thinly peopled territory. It is still true, that, besides its preeminent dignity, the province of Canterbury in extent, population, and the number of its bishops must take the lead. But in any future action of the Church the enormous development in wealth and population in the northern counties, together with the increase in the number of its bishops, will give to the province of York a weight in the councils of the Church which in former times it never possessed.

The relation of Convocation to Parliament has been the subject of learned discussion. Burn, in his work on 'Ecclesiastical Law,' lays it down as a principle of English law, that even in Saxon times, when the clergy in Synod agreed on any canon on Church matters, it required the ratification of the Witan and the king before it could be accepted as a law of the realm, and that the Norman Conquest made no change in this respect. Accordingly, even when Convocation<sup>1</sup> laid a tax upon the clergy, the assent of Parliament was still required before the measure had the force of law. Hence Parliament has usually treated the Convocation with respect, but only in the capacity of giving advice,<sup>2</sup> not at all as a co-ordinate power even in matters involving doctrine.

The fact that Convocation received its permanent shape in an age when the higher orders were extremely wealthy, and the lower ranks for the most part poor, naturally led to that inadequate representation of the

<sup>1</sup> Burn, *Eccles. Law*, Art. Convocation.

<sup>2</sup> Coke, *Inst.* iv. 5.



general body of the clergy which in modern times has been one great source of its weakness. The scale of representation was settled by Archbishop Peckham in 1283 in the following manner.<sup>1</sup> 'Each of the bishops shall cause the clergy of his diocese to be assembled in a certain place, and shall there have carefully expounded to them the propositions made on behalf of the king, so that from each diocese two proctors in the name of the clergy, and from each cathedral and collegiate chapter one proctor, shall be sent with sufficient instructions, who shall have full and express power of treating with us and our brethren upon the premises, and of consenting to such measures as for the honour of the Church, the comfort of the king, and the peace of the realm the community of the clergy shall provide.'

It is one of the numerous illustrations of the continuity of English institutions to find the Convocation of Canterbury still summoned in the numbers prescribed by Archbishop Peckham six hundred years ago. In the province of York there is a more full representation of the parochial clergy, two proctors having been summoned from each archdeaconry since 1279. In that province the cathedral bodies, moreover, are fewer in number. Thus the Convocation of York possesses more of a representative character than that of Canterbury, two thirds of the lower house of which province sit *ex officio*, and one third only is elected. The legal antiquarian finds abundant matter for his peculiar investigations in the early sittings, powers, and privileges of Convocation. This brief account may, however, suffice for the present purpose in tracing its rise within the Plantagenet

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Const. Hist.*, ch. xv. 199; Wilkins, ii. 49.

times until the progress of the Reformation modified its proceedings.

If now some account be given of the legislation directly affecting the Church in this great reign, reference must be made to several statutes. The first may be that of 1275, commonly styled that of Westminster the First.<sup>1</sup> Without expressly naming the clergy, it enacted that all classes of subjects claiming the public protection should be amenable to the same laws, and contribute to the common necessities. At a critical moment in the reign of Edward I., this statute was brought to bear with supreme effect upon the Convocation.<sup>2</sup> In 1296 it met in St. Paul's under the presidency of Archbishop Winchelsey. The king demanded a subsidy, and, aware of the temper of the archbishop, sent the following peremptory mandate to control the proceedings:—

‘Edward,<sup>3</sup> by the grace of God, King of England, to the honourable fathers in God, the archbishop, bishops, &c. We forbid you and every of you, under the penalties of whatever you are capable of forfeiting, to make, ordain, or assent to anything in your assembly which may turn to the prejudice or grievance of us, our ministers, or any other of our loyal subjects or adherents.’ The archbishop on his part produced a recent bull (*Clericis laicos*) forbidding the clergy, under pain of excommunication, to grant or pay any taxation on Church property without authority from Rome. Relying on this document, the archbishop informed the king that the clergy were disabled from making him a grant, but were prepared to send to Rome for permission to make one.<sup>4</sup> The king at once acted upon the

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Constitutional History*, ii. 109.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., ii. 130.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkins, ii. 224.

<sup>4</sup> Wilkins, ii. 226; *Anglia Sacra*, i. 50.

statute of Westminster the First. Sentence of outlawry was passed on the clergy refusing their contribution.<sup>1</sup> They had placed themselves outside the pale of common rights and protection. They were waylaid by robbers, their property was rifled, the archbishop himself was a chief sufferer, but the law gave no redress. The clergy were compelled to submit,<sup>2</sup> and the pope found it expedient to let the bull *Clericis laicos* sleep in peace. Not many years had elapsed before it was annulled by another pontiff.

But the great measure passed in this reign to limit clerical cupidity was that commonly known as the Mortmain Act. It is the Statute 7 Edw. I., 1279, '*De Religiosis*,' forbidding any religious person to buy or sell lands or tenements; or under colour of a gift, or term of years, to receive them from anyone; or by any means to appropriate them so that they come into mortmain (*ad manum mortuam deveniant*) under pain of forfeiture of the same. Lands belonging to the Church, or held by a corporation, were said to be in *the dead hand* or *mortmain*, because they ceased to be subject to the customary conditions and liabilities of lands passing by the ordinary rules of succession.

That the clergy, who were in fact the lawyers of the age, speedily found means to evade this Act is no more than might be expected, and the law in its turn endeavoured to meet those evasions by new enactments in several successive reigns, into which, with their complicated provisions, it is not necessary here to enter.

But in order to bring the subject more within the range of modern interests, it may be added that the present law of Mortmain, under an Act of George II., prohibits all legacies of this nature. It provides that

<sup>1</sup> Matt. West., in ann. 1296.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. West., in ann. 1297.



any gift of land, or of money, to be laid out in the purchase of land for charitable uses, shall be utterly void, unless given by deed executed twelve months before death, and enrolled in Chancery within six months of its execution. In its care against any concealment of a legacy under the guise of a gift, such a transaction is also to be void unless it be an unconditional unqualified grant to take effect immediately. The State has somewhat relaxed these restrictions in favour of schools and other things recognised as being of urgent public concern, but from the early days of which we have spoken, its care against the accumulation of landed estate in the *dead hand* has been of the most jealous character.

Matthew, the Westminster monk, noticing this law in his Chronicle for the year 1280, drily adds that the king and his nobles agreed upon it ‘not understanding, haply, that the army of the Amalekites was overthrown rather by the prayers of Moses than by the valour of the children of Israel.’

But Thorn,<sup>1</sup> the monk of Canterbury, pours forth this lamentation over that limiting statute: ‘Alas! Alas! How grievous! Thus hath perished that liberality so pleasing to God, whereby pious kings, nobles, and the rest of the faithful earnestly desired to found monasteries, to grant estates for the honour of God. Thenceforward this work of charity languisheth! The religious can acquire nothing new, and can scarcely retain what they have already acquired!’

In the year 1284, by the Statute *Circumspecte agatis* directions were given to the judges of the King’s Court which, under colour of controlling any interference with the jurisdiction of the bishops’ courts, tended to limit

<sup>1</sup> Thorn, *Chron. Abb. Aug. Cant.*, xxix. 9.



their power. By specifying certain suits in the ecclesiastical courts with which the royal officers were not to interfere, it was not obscurely intimated that the subject might be protected against the bishop's officer in other matters not enumerated. But there was seldom any steady enforcement of the laws in those days, and the ecclesiastical courts little heeded these restraining statutes.

The bearing of the king and people of England in the face of papal assumption was in harmony with their legislation. A remarkable incident brings it out in full display. The Scots, reduced to extremity, resolved to follow the example of John of England and purchase security by making Scotland a fief of the pope. Edward was duly warned of the negotiations, and was required<sup>1</sup> to send ambassadors to plead his cause before the pope in person. Edward laid the matter before the full Parliament<sup>2</sup> of the realm, and in its name the answer was returned. The Parliament replied that the kings of England had always exercised authority over Scotland; that it had never belonged to the Roman Church; and that the kings of England had never answered for their rights before any judge. They were, therefore, resolved that their lord and king should not answer before the pope concerning his Scottish rights. 'They were bound by oath to maintain the liberties, the customs, the laws of England, and they would maintain them with their whole strength. 'We do not permit,' they said, 'we cannot and ought not to permit, we will not permit, our lord and king, even if he were inclined to do it, or if he were to attempt to do it, to submit to demands so unusual, so unjustifiable, so prejudicial.'

So Englishmen were learning at last to speak. But

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, ii. 257.

<sup>2</sup> Walsingham, in *ann.* 1301.

in truth when king and people stood together the popes ever recoiled before them. The Papacy only prevailed through national discord. Still it is strange to survey rising above the chafing tide of papal arrogance the very rock of nationality, the imperial sufficiency of the Crown of England, which can be impleaded in no foreign court, upon which the pope's supremacy made final shipwreck, when more than two hundred years afterwards Clement required Henry VIII. to plead his cause before him.

Some of the leading ecclesiastics of the reign of Edward I. may require brief notice. Amongst these John Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury 1279–1292, must not be omitted. He was a Franciscan, a theologian,\* and a lawyer, known both in Oxford and in Rome. He owed his elevation to the Primacy to the immediate act of the pope, which Edward I. for some reason did not resent. Edward soon found that he had permitted a mere papal official to occupy the first place in his realm. The archbishop held a synod at Reading, in which, among other provisions, excommunication was pronounced against all who by virtue of the king's writ interfered with persons under ecclesiastical censure, or with the goods or estates of ecclesiastics. Edward was too strong as a sovereign, and in the support of his people, to overlook this audacity. The revocation of this part of the proceedings still remains in the records<sup>1</sup> to the effect that John, Archbishop of Canterbury, appeared before the king and his council in Parliament, and confessed and conceded that the clause touching the king's writ in the provisions of Reading should be erased and taken as unpronounced—that the king's

<sup>1</sup> Close Rolls; Wilkins, ii. 40.

officers should not be excommunicated for declining to arrest excommunicated persons, and that certain other invasions of the prerogative should be cancelled. This transaction was referred to in the days of Charles I. as one of the precedents showing the subordination of synods of the Church to Parliament.

In a synod held at Lambeth 1281, whose records may be found among the collections of councils,<sup>1</sup> many particulars may be seen illustrating the condition of the Church of that age. Amongst these may be noticed how the withdrawal of the cup from the laity was not yet fully consummated. The wine, it seems, was still given to them, but they were to be taught that they received the whole sacrament, both body and blood, under the species of bread; and that the wine was only administered in order that they might be the better able to swallow the 'sacramental body'! This synod ordained that every quarter priests should preach in plain and unscholastic language to the people on the chief articles of faith, the ten commandments, the chief sins and virtues, and on the seven sacraments. Like most other synods of those times it took notice of the moral delinquencies of those who were vowed to religion. It is a subject unpleasant to touch upon, but in the face of great questions which yet lie before us it is one that cannot be passed over in silence. The synod speaks of 'enormous lust prevailing,' and leading nuns to a wandering life. Other characteristic traits will be found in Peckham's contributions by those who recognise in the laws of an age the most sure illustrations of its life.

The question of the cup in the Eucharist receives illustration from another side in a decree of a diocesan

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, ii. 52.



synod at Exeter<sup>1</sup> 1287, which makes clear that the cup was still given to the laity in that diocese. For the laity are to be taught that in order to obviate any fear of idolatry which might occur to them, 'they receive under the species of bread that which hung upon the cross for their salvation, and in the cup they receive that which was shed from the body of Christ.' In all these notices the novelty of the doctrine of transubstantiation and the withdrawal of the cup decreed in the Council of Lateran 1215 may be plainly traced.

Peckham was a narrow ecclesiastic, not without learning, but rigid and severe. In Burnell, Bishop of Bath and Wells, Edward found a prelate belonging to the more enlightened class of that age. He was a sagacious statesman, the personal friend and adviser of the great Edward, and his trusted chancellor. The great legal reforms, the Act of Mortmain and others, which have been already noted, are in great measure due to this able prelate. The former he carried through Parliament against the influence of the archbishop, who naturally took the side of the monastic orders. Bishop Burnell, himself neither monk nor friar, and a judge in the royal court, rose above mere sectarian or ecclesiastical ideas, and was a moving spirit in the constitutional reforms of that remarkable reign.

One stain must be noted as resting on England towards the close of the primacy of Peckham, the special darkness of which has been only realised by the modern conscience within a few years. For the last two centuries the Jews had been permitted to plant settlements in England, and were found in several of the chief cities. In London their synagogue was in the Old Jewry, to which they have bequeathed their name.

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, ii. 133.



They were placed under the special jurisdiction of the 'Justicer of the Jews.' They had a chief Rabbi, then called their High Priest, under patent from the sovereign. The reader of 'Ivanhoe' will find a true picture of the treatment they received from time to time at the hand of oppressors. Still they remained, and accumulated wealth. Under special charters they were exempted from ordinary taxation, and from this and other well-known causes became odious to the clergy and laity alike. For the maintenance of their chartered privileges they were thrown on the support of the crown, a support often willingly given in return for large sums extorted in time of necessity, while on their side they knew how in more ordinary times to exact usurious interest. The popular feeling against them rose to its height in 1290, when the House of Commons demanded their expulsion, and a royal proclamation was sent forth commanding their departure from the kingdom. Under penalty of forfeiture of all their goods, they were forbidden to return. This exclusion lasted until the days of the Commonwealth. Doubtless our forefathers thought it an act of faithfulness to the Saviour thus to expel the unbelieving sons of Abraham; but subsequent kings when in need of loans were compelled to deal to less advantage with Jewish financiers abroad, instead of with those who would have been their own subjects. Moreover, the mercantile life of London, which deemed itself freed from rivals by this transaction, must have suffered from the absence of those who had the chief command of the foreign exchanges.

A charter<sup>1</sup> of King John appointing one of the Jewish officials above-named runs to the following effect:

<sup>1</sup> Collier, *Records*, xxxii.

—‘The king to all his liege subjects both Jewish and English greeting. Know ye that we have granted, and by this present charter have confirmed, to Jacob the Jew of London, presbyter of the Jews, the presbyterate of all the Jews throughout England, to have and to hold it as long as he liveth, freely, quietly, honourably and fully, in such wise that none presume to molest or hinder him. Moreover, we decree that he shall not be called upon to plead concerning any matter pertaining to himself, excepting before ourselves or our chief justice, as the Charter of Richard our brother testifies. Given by the hands of Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, our Chancellor at Rouen, the 31st day of July, in the first year of our reign.’

How much Jacob and his community were called upon to disburse to King John, the archbishop, and all officials who could either advance or impede the execution of this deed does not appear, but may readily be imagined. A very few years before the expulsion of the Jews, Archbishop Peckham (1282) issued his license<sup>1</sup> to the Bishop of London, allowing them to possess one synagogue and no more, provided that it be not adorned with pictures or made too handsome. One of this description, and one only, said the archbishop, might be tolerated without scruple.

The succeeding archbishop, Winchelsea, has already been named as attempting to place himself across the path of the great Edward in the matter of supplies, to his signal discomfiture. There is strong ground for thinking that this prelate intrigued with Edward’s unworthy son for the dethronement and imprisonment of the great king. The story is dwelt upon at length by the Chroniclers,<sup>2</sup> and they seem to be accordant in its

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, ii. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. West., *ann.* 1305.

main features. Thorn tells it with most detail in his curious Chronicle of the Abbots of St. Augustine, Canterbury—a chronicle peculiarly interesting as illustrating the intense pride<sup>1</sup> and pleasure taken by the members of those strange corporations in everything belonging to the dignity, the possessions, the privileges conferred on their house by pope, by nobles, and by monarchs. In the long contest for their exclusive privileges the monks of Augustine had been at bitter feud with many an archbishop. Winchelsey<sup>2</sup> had put forth his hand to touch some of the cherished rights of the great abbey, whereupon ensued some tedious appeals to Rome, and no small cost and vexation to the abbot. Thorn gives at great length the story of these oppressions, as he deemed them to be, and his pen is dipped in gall when he speaks of Winchelsey. This must be remembered in reading his account of that archbishop's disgrace. Yet it is sufficiently borne out by other authorities to render it more than credible. Thus then runs the story as it had been handed down at Canterbury some three or fourscore years. 'In the year 1305 Archbishop Robert was accused by the king of treason, in that he had conspired with many of the nobility to dethrone the king and subject him to perpetual imprisonment, his son Edward being substituted for him in the kingdom. The archbishop was unable to reply; in utter terror he cast himself on the ground at the king's feet, praying for mercy, weeping, and crying out that he submitted himself to the royal will. Thus was humbled that haughty and hateful man, who had basely depraved the priesthood, and used unheard-of tyranny to the people. In the same year the pope summoned the archbishop to appear before him and answer the

<sup>1</sup> See page 101.

<sup>2</sup> Thorn, xxvii. 30.



charges laid against him. The archbishop, therefore, sought license from the king to cross the sea. The king hearing of his arrival, commanded the doors of the chamber to be thrown open that all might enter who would, and hear the result of the audience. Then the king thus addressed him: "License to cross the sea willingly we grant thee, but license to return grant we or give thee none. We remember the tréachery, fraud, and treason which in Parliament at Lincoln thou didst devise with our barons against our royal dignity. Of this the letter sealed with thy seal is a manifest witness against thee. But for the love of the blessed Thomas, and the reverence and honour of the Church over which thou art placed, we thus far defer our vengeance, that we reserve thy punishment for the pope, who, as we believe and hope, will render to thee thy deserts. But from our protection we utterly exclude thee. We deny thee all grace and mercy; for unmerciful thou hast always been, therefore, to obtain mercy thou dost not deserve."

The details of this remarkable incident may be somewhat adjusted as well as amplified from other accounts. But it is a life-like narration. It seems clear that the king held the letter, the proof of Winchelsey's treason, and that the traitor was crushed. The great Plantagenet towering in moral and kingly dignity, as well as in his remarkable stature, above the prostrate Winchelsey, may well be contrasted with his great grandfather whose unkingly paroxysm of wrath led to the murder of his factious archbishop.

Winchelsey went forth into exile. His relations with the pope have been differently represented. But they were changed days for the Papacy.

Boniface VIII., vanquished and dishonoured by the



king of France, had recently died. Henceforth the popes were to strive to carry out their assumptions by a skilful alliance with the stronger.

Winchelsey was met at the Papal Court by a politic letter from Edward.<sup>1</sup> In that letter, after 'devoutly kissing the blessed feet,' Edward charged Winchelsey with being the cause of disgrace, losses, and disturbances to him and his kingdom. He then with remarkable political dexterity (whether truly or falsely who shall say?) declared that Winchelsey, by fomenting intrigues and difficulties, had been the chief hindrance to his undertaking once more the deliverance of the Holy Land, an achievement dear to his own heart as well as to the pope. A more dexterous parry could scarcely be conceived. It certainly was one that might well be delivered by an old Crusader.

The exiled archbishop was no Anselm or Becket, and found little sympathy. But his troubles were of no long duration. The king's death soon followed, and the accession of his worthless son, the Second Edward, soon brought about Winchelsey's restoration to his see. If we omit the destruction of the order of the Templars in obedience to a papal bull, which fell to his lot to execute, there is nothing of sufficiently marked importance belonging to the remainder of his archiepiscopate, or to the reign of Edward II., to call for special notice here.

If we may trust a letter given by Wharton,<sup>2</sup> Winchelsey's successor at Canterbury applied to Pope John XXII. for his canonisation. Certainly he was every way an inferior personage to Becket. Yet he had suffered

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, ii. 284.

<sup>2</sup> *Anglia Sacra*, i. 173; but see Wilkins, ii. 500, for a differently expressed letter on the same subject.

in the same cause—the immunities of the clergy. Therefore, Archbishop Walter wrote to the pope pressing the merits of a man who ‘had endured so many adversities, tribulations, anxieties, and straits for the rights and liberties of the Church. In protecting the state and liberty of the Church, he had lost his property; his chaplains and household had been dispersed. He had been compelled to go alone on foot like a mendicant. He had been ruined and banished, but had preserved the rights of his Church intact. Nothing was lacking to his true martyrdom, save that the sagacity of the great Edward stopped short of actual murder.’ Archbishop Walter vaguely added something about ‘innumerable miracles’ which might be set forth. But nothing came of all this. One Becket was enough for Canterbury. St. Robert was not to be a rival to St. Thomas. Times had already changed. For now the reign of the Third Edward opens up before us a movement in the mind of the English nation which was pregnant with the most far-reaching consequences.

Edward III. came to the throne in 1327, and reigned fifty years. At this time the residence of the popes at Avignon deprived them in no small degree of their title to consideration in the eyes of Europe. They seemed to be French dependants rather than supreme princes of Christendom. In several cases their personal character and extravagances led them still further to raise a sentiment of actual hostility by the extortion they sanctioned and encroachments they practised on the rights of the national churches. Pre-eminent among these was that system of ‘*provisions*’ against which Grostête,<sup>1</sup> Bishop of Lincoln, had already struggled, not without a measure of success. The

<sup>1</sup> Page 228.

popes claimed and exercised the power of issuing what was called a *provision*. This was a document anticipating the right of a patron, by nominating to a benefice not yet vacant some one enjoying the pope's favour, or able to purchase the nomination through a papal official.

Thus when the vacancy occurred, the lawful patron found himself barred from the exercise of his legal rights. Foreigners, for the most part non-resident, held a large part of the richest benefices. The revenues arising from their lands went to enrich other countries, and countless abuses resulted. One of these provisions,<sup>1</sup> addressed to the Abbot of St. Albans, runs thus: 'Innocent, bishop, &c., to his beloved sons, the Abbot and brethren of St. Albans, in the diocese of Lincoln; health and the apostolic benediction. Whereas our well-beloved son, John de Camecave, our nephew and chaplain, holds the Church of Wengrave, the right of presentation to which belongs, as we understand, to you: We, in our paternal affection, beg of you, and by these apostolic letters order you, to exchange the said church for the first one in your presentation which shall become vacant, which the said chaplain or his agent shall think proper to accept, reserving Wengrave for our own gift.' All men feel most deeply what comes home to themselves, and the monk of St. Albans, who chronicled the letter which so coolly disposed of two of the livings in the gift of that community, thus speaks of the feelings produced in that famous abbey: 'We have inserted this letter that all may know with what sufferings and injuries the Roman Court afflicted us wretched English. Whoever considers the purport of it may find in it contempt, injury, and oppression.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. Par., *in ann.* 1251.



Here is the cause why people secede in heart, although not in body, from our father the pope, who is provoked to the austerity of a stepfather; and also from our mother, the Roman Church, who vents her fury with the persecutions of a stepmother.'

A prolonged but ill-sustained resistance to this system was carried on through several reigns, with but indifferent success, owing in no small degree to the avarice or impolicy of the sovereign playing into the hands of the pope for his own selfish ends. As the reign of Edward III. advanced both king and people, and to a great extent the clergy also, saw their joint interest in staying the encroachment of a foreign power in this respect, and the subject of provisions was vigorously taken in hand. A letter from Edward to the pope is on record, a part of which is to the following effect: <sup>1</sup> After a preface of respectful language to the See of Rome, and an acknowledgment of the zeal of former pontiffs in not seeking their own but the things of Jesus Christ, it proceeds to say that 'the kings of England and the nobility, out of a pious disposition to promote the service of God, built and endowed churches, settling large revenues and privileges upon them, and furnished them with fitting ministers. Thus by care and cultivation the Lord's vineyard flourished. But now, to our great grief, the plants are strangely altered and the fruits degenerated into wild grapes. The wild boar out of the wood doth root it up, and the wild beasts of the field devour it. This is the condition of our Church under the present grievance of provisions, which burden has new weight added to it by the Apostolic See. Thus the encouragements of religion are spent upon unworthy persons; men that

<sup>1</sup> Walsingham, *Edw. III.*, ann. 1343.



neither understand the language of the country nor reside upon their benefices, and want both disposition and ability to discharge their office. These foreigners, being thus mercenary and unqualified, the end of the priesthood is lost, and the benefit of religion grows almost insignificant. By this conduct the clergy, our native subjects, persons of great learning and probity, well qualified for the pastoral function, and who might be serviceable to us in our public affairs, are discouraged in their studies through despair of preferment. These things, we are well assured, are displeasing to the Divine will.'

There is more to the same effect, and in firm but courteous language a distinct intimation that if the pope will not yield, the King and Parliament of England would provide a remedy. But on this point the Court of Rome never returned any answer beyond vague professions of desire for the good of the Church, and more decided action became necessary.

Accordingly the Statute of Provisors<sup>1</sup> was passed in 1350, by which it was decreed that 'in case the pope collated to any see or benefice in disturbance of the rights of patrons, the collation to such dignity or benefice should be forfeited to the crown for that turn. And if anyone should procure such a provision from the pope in disturbance of a patron's rights, he should answer in person, and in case of conviction be imprisoned until he had paid a fine to the crown and made satisfaction to the party aggrieved. He was likewise to renounce all right under the provision, and find surety that he would not repeat the offence, or sue anyone in the court of Rome on any matter arising out of the proceedings.'

<sup>1</sup> Stephens on *Eng. Constit.*, vi. 5.

But 'the majesty of the law' in those days was seated on a somewhat unstable throne, and history shows that subsequent legislation was needed to confirm or re-establish the force of this statute. To the same period of antipapal legislation in England belongs a brief of Edward III., addressed to Archbishop Sudbury to the following effect:—'Whereas<sup>1</sup> we have understood that letters and bulls prejudicial to ourselves, our subjects, and our realm have been addressed to you from foreign parts; we, wishing to take precautions against any injury which might arise from them, command you to transmit any such documents to us and our council immediately on their reception. We and our council having thereupon read and examined them, shall take further action as shall seem to us just. From publishing or carrying into effect any such writings you and all ecclesiastical persons shall surcease at your peril, save in so far as you may receive it in command from us or our council.' The archbishop replied,<sup>2</sup> acknowledging the king's mandate and promising that he would 'obey the same reverently in all respects as it became him to do.'

This Act was followed by others in 1363 and 1390, confirming and extending its enactments. In order still further to secure the position of the officials and others who should resist papal provisions under the Statute of Provisors, the first statute of *præmunire* was passed in 1353. But it is the fuller form of this law which was passed 1393, in the reign of Richard II., that is commonly known as the Statute of *Præmunire*.

This Act decreed that 'whoever<sup>3</sup> procured at Rome or elsewhere any translations, processes, excommunications, bulls, instruments, or other things, which touched

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 107.<sup>2</sup> Ibid., iii. 108.<sup>3</sup> Blackstone.

the king, his crown, and realm, and all persons aiding and assisting therein, should be put out of the king's protection, their lands and goods forfeited to the king's use, and they should answer in person to the king and his council.' The future course of history may be so far anticipated as to note with what crushing effect Henry VIII. brought this statute to bear upon Cardinal Wolsey and the whole body of the English clergy, when at last he determined on breaking the papal power in England. It may also not be out of place to observe that subsequent legislation placed several other offences against the dignity or crown of England under the same statute. Thus, for example, were a dean<sup>1</sup> and chapter to decline to elect to a vacant bishopric the person nominated by the crown, they would be subject to the penalties of this statute, and *incur a præmunire*. The name of the statute<sup>2</sup> is taken from the words of the writ preparatory to its execution, *Præmunire facias A.B.* It is said that *præmunire* was used in law Latin for *præmonere* or *citare*.

If it be asked how far these statutes accomplished the desired result, it must be replied that the degree in which they were enforced varied greatly during the troubled years which followed in England. They were in fact played with according to supposed exigencies by the statesmen of those times. But they were not a dead letter. An archbishop of Canterbury in the days of Henry VI. could decline the suggestion of the pope that he should endeavour to obtain the repeal of 'that execrable statute;' and in the face of a bull of suspension<sup>3</sup> refused to consecrate a nominee of the pope to the see of Ely. In the earlier days of the existence

<sup>1</sup> 25 Hen. VIII., c. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Blackstone, b. iv. c. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



of these statutes they struck at one of the greatest of the prelates of that age, William Courtenay,<sup>1</sup> Bishop of London, the same who withstood John of Gaunt when he was the champion of Wycliffe in St. Paul's—the same who as archbishop suppressed Lollardism in Oxford. The Florentines were then among the greatest merchants of Europe, and falling under the pope's displeasure on account of some Italian rivalries, he had issued a bull against them. Courtenay presumed without royal license to have the bull read at Paul's Cross. The Florentine warehouses in London were thus laid open to robbery, and the Lord Mayor intervened with the king (Edward III.) on their behalf. The bishop of London was at once brought under a *præmunire*. He must either forfeit his temporalities, or recall the bull. He chose the latter, and went through the humiliation of instructing his deputy, not merely to repudiate the bull but to deny that he had proclaimed it. He expressed surprise that so great a misunderstanding of his words should have arisen. But if these statutes were occasionally put in force, it is equally easy to point out occasions on which they were flagrantly violated. For example we may point to the election of Kemp to the see of London in 1421, as an instance on the other side. The chapter of St. Paul's elected Polton, Bishop of Hereford. By an intrigue between the pope and the crown, this was set aside by a notification from the pope that he had already by provision translated Kemp, Bishop of Chichester, to the vacant see. So little faithful to the liberties and laws of the realm were their appointed guardians when it suited their purpose to permit such violations.

Yet another instance may be brought forward from

<sup>1</sup> Milman, *Annals of St. Paul's*, p. 75.



another quarter, which may show how faithful even in early times were the judges of England to their trust when they were left free to fulfil their legal instincts. Chicheley, when appointed Bishop of St. David's, claimed the privilege of retaining a certain prebend in Salisbury Cathedral. Having to answer<sup>1</sup> in the king's court on this matter, he pleaded that 'St. Peter the Apostle by his bulls granted him license to enjoy all other benefices.' 'The grant of the apostle,' said the Chief Justice, 'cannot change the law of the land.' 'Papa omnia potest,' replied Chicheley's counsel. The Chief Justice declined to enter on any such matter. 'Neither will I,' said he, 'enter upon a question as to the power of an apostle; all I can say is, that I cannot see how he, by any bull of his, can change the law of England.' It is well known that the Papal Court never draws back from any claim to power which has once been asserted. It never abandoned the ground it had assumed in the matter of provisions, however little able to enforce them. Even when a sovereign before the Reformation was strong enough to make his will respected, and secure the election by the chapters and the confirmation by the pope of the prelate he might please to nominate, the Roman document confirming the appointment still assumed the form of a *provision*. In modern days the exercise of this power has reduced the Roman Catholic hierarchy, in all countries where it has lost the support and alliance of the State, into the mere creature of the papal will. The modern Roman bishop is appointed and exists at the nod of the pope. And in the most recent times, ultramontaniam—that is the most extreme view of the papal infallibility and despotism—has succeeded in brand-

<sup>1</sup> Hook, *Lives*, v. 23; from the Year Books, Hen. IV.

ing as Gallicanism the last vestiges of the independence of national churches which yet survived, and in making the Roman Church absolutely and distinctively *papal* throughout its organisation.

That the great interests of religion, both practical and doctrinal, were intimately connected with all these questions must be clear to the most thoughtless reader. Yet the shape which Church questions assumed during the centuries which have passed under survey has for the most part resulted from the struggles consequent on the encroachments of papal authority on the national independence in Church and State. Deeply rooted in that remote past lie the foundations of our English liberties. The royal or feudal tyranny, the papal despotism, the liberties of the chartered trading cities, the turbulent intellectual life of the universities, nay the *vis inertiae* of the mere monastic multitude as distinguished from their more learned brethren, made their weight felt in different proportions, and at different times. But from their continuous interplay, and the eddies of their surging counter-currents, the mighty stream of English thought at length took form and direction, and rushed onward in that ever-widening flood which has borne on with it the liberties of the human race.

The national movement in an anti-papal direction has been the main object so far in the consideration of this period of history. It is so important in itself and in its consequences, that to deal with it somewhat as a whole must tend to clearness. But there are other events and other persons belonging to the same era demanding notice.

There is a question which can only be touched. How far in those mediæval times Christianity was a

living power in the hearts of men ; and how far, though marred in its fair proportions and disfigured by baser accretions, it could bring salvation to the troubled conscience and purity to the life, is indeed a question that outweighs those transitory struggles. He who would answer it must search into the remains of Christian biography and other records of the inner life of those times. For such a review there is not space in these limited pages. But in this reign of Edward III. arose the first distinctly religious movement which stirred the dead surface of mediæval Christianity. The life and teaching of John Wycliffe will raise other considerations than those of contested patronage and papal taxation. The gravity of the issues, and the extent and permanence of the results involved in that movement, demand and will receive consideration as a whole in a separate chapter. But in this place ought to be noticed a few of the leading prelates of the period under review.

Among great ecclesiastics of the reign of Edward III., Stratford, Archbishop of Canterbury 1333-1348, must claim a distinguished place, but as the great minister of state rather than the divine. He had an important share in the conduct of the financial and diplomatic business connected with the French wars in that eventful reign. But if he was a statesman rather than a churchman, his successor, Thomas Bradwardine, the *Doctor Profundus* among the schoolmen, was as distinctly and eminently a theologian as well as a mathematician. Bradwardine found an editor in the reign of James I. in the person of Sir Henry Savile, who published his principal work, 'On the Cause of God against Pelagius,' a formidable folio of 900 pages. Those who have examined this book seem deeply impressed by its fearless logic, as well as its grasp of principles, though



it is disfigured to the modern reader by its hard scholastic style.

As described by the Church historian Milner, who has analysed it with care, it is an exposition of the doctrines of St. Augustine on grace, freewill, and predestination; topics which naturally led him to treat also at length the nature of the Divine Being, His will, His knowledge, and the relation of these to the human will. He does not hesitate to charge the received scholastic doctrine of that age, at least in its results, with Pelagianism: ‘Almost the whole world,’ he says, ‘is gone after Pelagius into error.’ The doctrine of human merit as taught by the schools, and as repudiated in the 12th and 13th Articles of the Reformed Church of England, meets with his most vigorous censure. These high doctrines, however, remained locked up in the abstruse dialect of the schools. When brought forth two centuries later by the movement of the Reformation into the debates of the market-place, they stirred men’s minds as they have seldom been stirred before or since. In the days of Bradwardine men were for the most part content to wonder and pass by. The Nun’s Priest in Chaucer, a few years later, said, as most men said, of this deep doctrine:—

But I ne cannot bolt it to the bran,  
As can the holy doctor Augustin,  
Or Boece, or the bishop *Bradwardin*,  
Whether that Goddès worthy fore-witting  
Straineth me needly for to do a thing,  
Or else if the free choice be granted me  
To do that same thing, or to do it not,  
Though God fore-wot it ’ere that it was wrought,  
Or if His witting straineth never a deal,  
But by necessity conditional  
I will not have to do of such matter.

But though the world in general could only wonder,



it may well be thought that one who entered Oxford a very few years after that part of Bradwardine's course was run may have been drawn in no small measure to the Scriptural basis which he required for all doctrine by the teaching of the great *doctor profundus*, the most recent glory of the University. The dates at least will suggest this, for Wycliffe entered Oxford about 1340, and Bradwardine died in 1349.

His archiepiscopate was brief indeed. Having been consecrated at Avignon, he landed at Dover August 19, and died of the plague then raging in England August 26. He was one of the few men of great eminence in those days whose names have come down to us without a stain of worldliness or wrong. When chaplain to Edward III. in his French wars, his influence with the king and the soldiers was that of a Christian. Loved and honoured in his own days, he could also draw from the Protestant historian Milner the eulogium that he was 'a studious, thoughtful scholar of the fourteenth century; who, unaided by human connections in an age dark and unpromising throughout Europe, and in our own island full of darkness, seems to have lived the life of faith in the Son of God.' Such an one was no common man.

In the days of his successor, Islip, the Statute of Provisors noticed in this chapter was passed to check the encroachments of the Roman See. In the same archiepiscopate the old question of the privileges of the clergy and their exemption from civil jurisdiction was again raised, and will receive abundant illustration from the following records.

Archbishop Islip endeavoured to meet the prevailing complaints about the scandalously lenient treatment which clerical offenders received, by the constitution of

which the following is an abstract:<sup>1</sup> ‘Lately in the Parliament at London, at our instance, an endeavour was made to stop injuries inflicted on the Church, at which we could not connive. Secular judges had presumed to thrust in their sickle into the divine harvest. They had presumed to apprehend even priests, and, notoriously exceeding their jurisdiction, had proceeded against them when indicted for various crimes. They had usurped a power over the anointed of the Lord which was not theirs, and, contrary to the sacred canons and the privileges of the Church, have most shamefully condemned them to death. They have done this under the pretext that clergy, under the cover of their privilege, have been emboldened to perpetrate crime. They have said that criminals of this class, duly convicted before the secular judge, have been claimed by the ecclesiastical authorities in due course. They assert that clerical offenders so surrendered have been dealt with by so lenient an imprisonment, and so luxuriously fed, that prison has been no punishment to them, but rather ease and refreshment, in which evil thoughts have nourished their vices. They say, moreover, that notorious and infamous offenders are readily admitted to do penance, and are then liberated. Thus the vicious clergy proceed from bad to worse, and those who have not offended are tempted by the prospect of immunity from punishment to fall into sin, and the peace of the realm is violated.

‘Weighing these grave matters, and fearing lest the privileges of the clergy should suffer loss through abuses which tend to a breach of the public tranquillity, by the advice and consent of our brethren, we ordain, with regard to the custody of such clergy, that all

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 13.

ecclesiastical persons who have jurisdiction in that respect shall keep such criminals in strict imprisonment, having due regard to their rank and quality and the gravity of their offences. They must not be suffered to return to their former life, and if they be notorious malefactors, or if their liberation would be a scandal to the realm, then twice on holidays and once on Saturdays shall they be fed with bread of grief and water of affliction, but on the Lord's day with bread, small beer, and pulse. Nor shall any liberation be permitted to them.

‘With regard to offenders of less heinous character, we require that strict inquisition be made into their manner of life before proceedings be taken for their release. Dated at Lambeth, February 18, 1351.’

‘He has confessed,’ the reader may well say who follows such an ordinance. The Constitutions of Clarendon stand vindicated beside the archbishop's words, and the quarrel in which Becket died comes out in its full deformity. Such efforts for reform failed, if it were only for the multiplicity of jurisdictions which it was attempted to regulate. Bishops, archdeacons, abbots, and other minor potentates had their special rights and immunities. Responsibility indefinitely divided ceased to be recognised.

Educated villany is in modern times the most difficult to detect and to keep in restraint. In old times the clergy had almost a monopoly of the offences which could come under this description. We learn from letters patent of Edward III.,<sup>1</sup> dated February 20, 1352, that one of the archbishop's complaints had been that clerks convicted of counterfeiting the coin or privy seal of the realm had not been surrendered to the

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 28.



Church. The king ordained that he would hold the matter in suspense until it could be fully debated in the next Parliament, but that meanwhile no clerk so convicted should be executed, but kept in close imprisonment, without surrender to the ecclesiastical authorities.

The English people never believed in the efficient execution of such ordinances as those of Archbishop Islip. These invidious exceptions, and the commonly believed culpable laxity of the ecclesiastical courts towards clerical malefactors, will follow us to the very eve of the Reformation. It will be seen that the discovery of the real animus of the people towards the ecclesiastics, and the first encounter of the clergy with the royal power in the reign of Henry VIII., must be traced to the terrible death of Richard Hunne in the prison of the Bishop of London, and to the arrogant assertion of clerical privileges in connection with the subsequent proceedings. It was a secondary purpose of the bishops' prisons, though one which the unhappiness of future years made but too prominent, that persons accused of heresy were there incarcerated. The primary and necessary purpose was to receive those clerical malefactors who were handed over by the secular courts to the bishop. When it is remembered how exceedingly numerous were those who, in virtue of some of the lower of the seven orders of the Roman Church, could claim clerical privilege, it may well be thought that bishops' prisons needed to be kept in good repair and custody if ordinary justice was to be done. That it was not done, and that these private prisons were fearfully abused, our forefathers believed. Indeed to the modern thought the very idea of separate jurisdiction and private prison stands utterly condemned as inconsistent with the first principles of justice and of freedom.



The name of Langham,<sup>1</sup> Islip's successor at Canterbury 1367, may introduce a list of names illustrating the degree in which the clergy held the public administration in their hands.

Archbishop Langham was lord chancellor, the bishop of Bath and Wells lord treasurer, the archdeacon of Lincoln keeper of the privy seal. Another archdeacon was chancellor of the exchequer. It would be wearisome to recite the remainder of the long clerical roll of state officers.

Passing on only two or three years to the days of Whittlesey, the succeeding archbishop, a momentary reaction against this clerical *régime* arose. Times had changed. There were military reverses in France. Supplies were urgently demanded for the war, and Parliament met, 1371, in grave discontent with the administration. They complained that 'the government of the kingdom had been managed for a long time by men of Holy Church, whereby great mischiefs and damages have happened in times past, and more may happen in time to come.' They accordingly petitioned the king 'that a provision be made in form of law to prevent such inconvenience for the future, and that none but laymen may be capable of the offices of chancellor, treasurer, clerk of the privy seal, barons of the exchequer, and other great civil officers.' The king gave an evasive reply, but the experiment was made, and laymen were placed in the high offices of chancellor,<sup>2</sup> treasurer, and privy seal. Whether they were unequal to their duties, or whether counter-influence was too strong for them, or whatever other reason may be assigned, in no long time the bishop of St. David's became chancellor, and affairs proceeded in their old

<sup>1</sup> Collier, iii. 128.

<sup>2</sup> Walsingham, *Hypodig. Neust.*, ann. 1371.

course. For this there was a twofold necessity. Not yet could there be found outside the ranks of the clergy a sufficient number of educated men with competent learning to conduct the business of the realm. But beside and beyond this the revenues were insufficient to provide adequate salaries to maintain these great officers of state. It was deemed cheaper to reward public services with good preferment in the Church. Successful diplomacy, or legal work, was yet for many a year to obtain its remuneration by the gift of rich rectories, or yet higher preferment. That this process secularised the Church, and turned its ablest men and its best endowments almost entirely away from their legitimate use, was seen and lamented by men of more spiritual insight, and led in no small degree to the extremes to which Wycliffe went in his denunciations of clerical wealth. But the remedy was not found yet. When it was found, the Church of the sixteenth century had to surrender a large portion of that wealth which had been with difficulty tolerated in the preceding centuries because of the public burdens which were thrown upon it to sustain.

The early days of the young king Richard II. were clouded by the reverses which befell the English forces in France. Struggling in vain to hold the foreign possessions of the crown, they left the coasts of England open to invasion. This led to a new view of the Church militant. A mandate addressed to his clergy by Archbishop Sudbury in 1377, the year of the death of Edward III., sounds the note of alarm thus:<sup>1</sup> ‘We have received a royal letter to the following effect:—Our enemy of France with his adherents, threatening

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 119.

great evils against us and our lieges, has assembled a large force both of ships and men. They have attacked and burned many towns on the coast, and strive utterly to ruin our Church and kingdom. We have, therefore, summoned all available men between the ages of sixty and sixteen in all the counties, to appear armed in array and to be in readiness to repel invasion wherever it may appear. You and the rest of the prelates and the whole clergy are bound to bring a helping hand for the safety of the Church and realm. We, therefore, enjoin on your fidelity, all abbots, priors, monks, and all other ecclesiastics of your diocese, to take arms in due array, and provide for the defence of their several possessions. You shall take care that they be arrayed in thousands, hundreds, and twenties, that they may be ready to march at your command, with our other lieges, against our enemies. This command, as you bear love to us, to our honour and your own, and to the safety of the Holy Church and our kingdom, you shall not fail to observe.' The archbishop accordingly proceeds to enjoin his clergy in the strictest manner to carry out the royal injunction.

It was of old, then, as it is now. Party feuds and dissensions may sever man from man, but at the cry of danger to England, party disappears, and a nation only is recognised. It might have been thought that the fiery cross could only thus summon a Highland clan. But in the England of Crecy and Poitiers, when king and archbishop sounded the alarm, the monks of St. Augustine could stand in array with the armed citizens of Canterbury for hearths and for altars. A different note had been sounded through the Churches of England but twenty-one years before. News had come of the Black Prince's great victory at Poitiers, and Edward



thus wrote to the Bishop of Exeter :<sup>1</sup>—‘Just and marvellous in His works, disposing the wishes of His servants with inscrutable wisdom, God both prevents and follows us, as we most humbly acknowledge He hath often done with us. It was in the fear of God that we prosecuted our claim to the throne of France which by rightful succession had devolved upon us. Peaceful overtures having failed, with the hope of celestial succour we undertook a just war in vindication of our rights. In carrying on that war, the Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ, hath prevented us with glory and victories. In the abundance of His goodness, continuing His mercy, He hath dealt most gloriously and marvellously with our eldest son Edward, Prince of Wales. Through God’s grace, after various successes, on the 19th day of September last, there met him near Poitiers with a large army John de Valois, the unjust occupier of the throne. A great battle followed ; but justice looking down from heaven and not permitting injustice to prevail, gave the said John into our son’s hand. Many nobles were also taken, and a great slaughter of the enemy ensued with trifling loss on our part. We rejoice not in that loss of human life, but contemplating the divine mercy poured forth around us our son and his army, and hoping for the blessing of a speedy peace, we rejoice in the Lord. We humbly offer the sacrifice of praise for so many and so great gifts to us and ours. We, therefore, ask you from our heart to offer devout thanks, prayers, and other works of piety for ourselves and the prince and our faithful soldiers. Intreat the Giver of temporal and eternal felicity that this season of promise may issue in the wished-for success, and that the Almighty will enable us so to rule our temporal kingdom, that all may

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 36.



tend to its good and quietness, and that after this life we may obtain the everlasting prize.'

It would be superfluous to criticise the policy, the language, or the piety of this document, or to ask which of the royal clerical scribes drew it up. Nor need the episcopal circular<sup>1</sup> be quoted in which thanksgiving services were ordered to be performed. It is sufficient to note the pulse of joy which vibrated through the Churches of England when the news of that wonderful victory arrived. The transition was the more bitter when that era of victory had closed, and clergy and laity were called upon to keep watch and ward against the violation of their own coasts.

Thus it was in gloom and uncertainty that the long and glorious reign of Edward III. ended. The old king's last years were swayed by an evil woman, or were the sport of faction. The Black Prince, the hero and the darling of the nation, lay under his canopy in the Cathedral of Canterbury. The glories of Crecy and Poitiers were indeed memories that could never die ; but their territorial results had almost vanished. A young child was the heir of the Plantagenet race. The Lollards were shaking the old system to its foundations. A man need not be timorous who should dread what might be coming upon England, when at last the victorious sword<sup>2</sup> of Edward was hung over his tomb in Westminster Abbey.

A long century of trouble and woe, of foreign war and domestic strife, was yet to intervene. Changes and discoveries undreamed of before were to prepare the way. Then, at last, the foreign ecclesiastical despotism should cease to bear sway in England.

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley, *Memorials of Westminster Abbey*, p. 141.

## CHAPTER XI.

## WYCLIFFE AND THE LOLLARDS.

THE period has now been reached when the deeper mysteries of religion itself, and not merely the State precautions of *provisors* and *præmunire*, began to agitate men's minds. Hitherto, whatever views men may have taken of papal encroachments, and the limitations to which the supreme power of the pontiff might be subjected, scarcely a voice had been heard raising the fundamental doubt whether that power was in itself a usurpation, and whether the doctrine of the schools could be harmonised with the teaching of the Word of God. One deathless name and one illustrious life will raise all these questions—questions which from that day to this have divided Christendom. That name and that life are those of John Wycliffe. Let Knighton<sup>1</sup> (or whoever wrote under that name), a contemporary opponent, testify to the opinion of his own age: ‘As a doctor in theology he was the most eminent in those days; in philosophy second to none; and in scholastic learning incomparable. He made it his great aim, with the subtilty of his learning, and by the profundity of his own genius, to surpass the genius of other men and to vary from their opinions.’

The life of Wycliffe reaches from about 1324 to 1384, and some of the principal dates of his personal history within that period may be thus enumerated.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Eventibus Ang.*, col. 2644, ed. 1652. <sup>2</sup> Shirley, *Fusc. Zizan.*, p. xiii.

He is said to have entered the University of Oxford in 1340, and to have been head of Balliol College in 1361. He took the degree of Doctor of Divinity at some time between 1362 and 1372; and lectured in Oxford with great vigour and attractiveness. In 1374 he was employed in diplomatic service, and after great peril in subsequent years from episcopal and papal proceedings, retired to Lutterworth about 1381, where he died not long afterwards.

It is, perhaps, scarcely possible that any attempt to give a summary account of the work and opinions of so great a man should escape the charge of crudeness and dogmatism. The popular estimate of him is probably more true and accurate than the partial judgments of writers who have regarded him too much from their own point of view, and have shown themselves unable to appreciate the results of his peculiar training, the gradual evolution and growth of his opinions, and his relation to the spirit of the times in which he lived. The chief writers of the subsequent age regard him with unmeasured dislike as a heretic condemned by popes and council. Since the Reformation, until the labours of Dr. Vaughan, Professor Shirley, Sir F. Madden, and others in our own times, little had been done to elucidate his history so as to display the true growth of his intellectual life and opinions. He has, therefore, been charged with inconsistencies and other faults, and, like Cranmer in a later age, has been subjected to many unfair criticisms to which the chronology of his mental history furnishes the true reply. Milner,<sup>1</sup> the Church historian, for example, seems unable to understand the true greatness of his character, and ventures to hint that for personal safety he 'made sacrifices inconsistent

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. of Church*, c. iii. cent. xiv.



with a direct and open sincerity.' He charges him with 'sophistical methods of argument, and such evasive modes of speech as are very incompatible with the conduct of a pious Reformer.' To expect that a great schoolman should abandon his scholastic methods when arguing with scholastics, or to insist that a man standing before a tribunal where his life is in danger shall categorically expound the full meaning of his doctrinal teaching, seems the essence of pedantic narrowness. It has generally been thought an instance of not unsanctified or unlawful subtlety when St. Paul, in an assembly fortuitously united against himself, divided<sup>1</sup> it, by announcing himself as 'a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee.' Dean Hook,<sup>2</sup> notwithstanding his strong ecclesiastical sympathies, deals out fairer measure when he says: 'John Wycliffe may be justly accounted one of the greatest men that our country has produced. He is one of the very few who have left the impress of their minds, not only on their own age, but on all time. He it was who first, in the Middle Ages, gave to faith its subjective character. . . . His next step was to maintain that the only proof, by which we can establish a disputed proposition in revealed religion, must be deduced from the Bible. . . . Therefore the Bible must be translated, and he translated it.' In the judgment of Dean Milman,<sup>3</sup> beside his various erudition and academic fame, there is this to be added: 'The vigour and energy of his genius, his perspicacity, the force of his language, his mastery over the vernacular English, the high supremacy which he vindicated for the Scriptures, which by immense toil he promulgated in the vulgar tongue—these were his own, to be learned in no school, to be attained by none of the ordinary courses of study. As

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiii. 6.<sup>2</sup> Vol. iii. c. i.<sup>3</sup> *Latin Christianity*, xiii. 6.



with his contemporary Chaucer rose English Poetry in its strong homely breadth and humour, in the wonderful delineation of character with its finest shades, in its plain, manly good sense and feeling; so was Wycliffe the father of English Prose, rude but idiomatic, biblical in much of its picturesque phraseology, at once highly coloured by, and colouring, the translation of the Scriptures.'

When Wycliffe became known to fame as the unsparing opponent of the mendicant orders, he found some of the most powerful sections of the clergy with him.

The causes have already been noticed which had led to the power, and also to the unpopularity, of those orders. In the days of Wycliffe they were still producing some men of ability and occupying high places in the Church, but they were as a whole incurably corrupt, and in attacking them Wycliffe was in accordance with strong popular feeling. His treatise against friars occasionally reflects the sarcasm, with which Chaucer, his contemporary, depicts the begging friar, when, after his sermon in a Yorkshire church:—

He went his way, no longer would he rest  
With scrip and tipped staff ytucked high :  
In every house he gan to pore and pry,  
And beggèd meal and cheese, or elsè corn,—

promising the prayers of his convent for all contributors, whose names were ostentatiously written on a tablet carried by his comrade. But alas for the promised prayers!—

For when that he was out at door, anon  
He planed away the namès every one,  
That he before had written in his tables,  
He servèd them with nifles and with fables.

But Wycliffe took a higher stand than this, for he discussed from the life of the Saviour, and the Apostles, the Scriptural grounds on which the whole theory of the mendicant religious life should stand condemned.

In this part of the contest of Wycliffe's life he had an illustrious predecessor in Richard Fitz-Ralph, commonly known as Armachanus, from the dignity to which he attained as archbishop of Armagh in 1347. This prelate carried on a long and vigorous controversy with the mendicant friars, even travelling to Avignon to remonstrate with the pope in person against their practices and their exorbitant privileges.

Walsingham,<sup>1</sup> the monastic chronicler of St. Alban's, a bitter opponent of Wycliffe, thus shows the feeling of the regular monks against the upstart friars, and the notion generally current about the purity of the Papal Court:—‘Armachanus maintained his opinions as to the friars before the chief pontiff strenuously and long. He proved abundantly that they had deviated from their own rules. But at length, alas! the English clergy withdrew their support, the wealth of the friars prevailed in the Papal Court, and they obtained a confirmation of their privileges.’

An act of Pope Urban V. was the means of bringing out Wycliffe into public life. Urban demanded the arrears of the tribute to which John had subjected the kingdom, and now remaining unpaid for many years. Wycliffe, who was already, apparently, a royal chaplain, was called into council, and was appointed one of the king's commissioners to confer on this matter, at Bruges, with the delegates of Gregory XI., who had now succeeded Urban. The issue of these negotiations shows how far the Papacy had now retrograded. The pope,

<sup>1</sup> Walsingham, *in ann.* 1357.

indeed, surrendered none of his supposed rights, but he remitted all existing claims and suits then pending in relation to provisions and other papal extortions. The king, on his side, maintained all the restrictive legislation which had been directed against the pope.

It seems that both the study of the papal claims thus forced upon Wycliffe, and the nearer view which he now obtained of the corruption of the Papacy, led him, henceforth, to a more distinct perception of its lack of a Scriptural and historical basis. Before this, he avowed himself 'a lowly and obedient son of the Roman Church,' intent, indeed, on necessary reforms, but nothing more. We may afterwards hear him replying to a papal citation in words which do not fall short of Luther's plain speaking. 'The pope,'<sup>1</sup> said he, 'is called the highest vicar that Christ hath here on earth; and the highness of a vicar of Christ is not to be measured by worldly highness, but in this, that he followeth Christ more than other men in virtuous living—for thus the Gospel teacheth. . . . Beyond this, I believe that no man should follow the pope, no, nor any saint that is in heaven, except inasmuch as he shall follow Christ. . . . This, also, I take to be wholesome counsel, that the pope should leave his worldly lordships to worldly lords, as Christ did, and that he speedily see to it that all his clergy do the same, for so did Christ, and so taught his disciples, till the fiend came who hath blinded this world. . . . Our pope will not, I suppose, show himself Anti-Christ, by working contrary to the will of Christ. For if, by himself or by any of his, he will summon against reason and persist in it, he is an open Anti-Christ.'

A man who had this gift of plain speaking, who

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan, p. 321.



could sway the learned world of Oxford with the use of their own scholastic methods, as well as give emphatic expression to some of the chief grievances of the Commons of England, was a power not easy to deal with. To what extent the country was prepared to go with him, or rather to what extent he reflected the opinions of his countrymen, may be gathered from the Preamble to the petition of the so-called 'good Parliament,' which met in 1376. They declared that the ecclesiastical dues paid to the Court of Rome amounted to 'five times more than is paid to the king from the whole produce of the realm.'—'For money, the brokers of that sinful city, Rome, promote many caitiffs, being altogether unlearned and unworthy, to a thousand marks living yearly, the learned and worthy can hardly obtain twenty marks, whereby learning decayeth. Aliens and enemies to their land, who never saw, nor come to see, their parishioners, having those livings whereby they despise God's service, convey away the treasure of the realm, and are worse than Jews or Saracens.' 'God hath given his sheep to the pope to be pastured, and not to be shorn or shaven: lay-patrons, perceiving the simony and covetousness of the pope, do thereby learn to sell their benefices to mere brutes, no otherwise than Christ was sold to the Jews.' . . . 'The pope's collector, and other strangers, the king's enemies, and only spies for English dignities, disclosing the secrets of the realm, ought to be discharged.' 'The said collector keepeth a house in London, with clerks and offices thereto belonging, as if it were one of the king's regular courts, transporting yearly to the pope twenty thousand marks, and commonly more; cardinals and other aliens remaining at the Court of Rome, whereof one is dean of York, another of Salisbury, another of Lincoln, another arch-



deacon of Canterbury, another of Durham, another of Suffolk, another of York—another is prebendary of Thame and Massingdon, another prebendary of York—all these and divers others have the best dignities in England, and have sent over to them yearly twenty thousand marks: that the pope to ransom Frenchmen, the king's enemies, who defend Lombardy for him, doth also at his pleasure levy a subsidy from the whole clergy of England . . . that the pope's collector hath this year taken to his use the first fruits of all benefices . . . that there are now thirty cardinals instead of twelve as wont to be, and all the said thirty cardinals, except two or three, are the king's enemies.'

So spake the English Parliament in 1376. Crecy and Poitiers had raised the martial fame of England in that great reign to the highest pinnacle. But the cost to the kingdom of those prolonged French wars had been most exhausting in blood and treasure. The king, like his grandfather, was compelled by his necessities to throw himself on the liberality of his subjects, and the House of Commons was not slow to learn and to use its power. Little as it might understand of the great religious principles involved, or of the true notion of religious liberty or of the gospel life, this much it saw—one of the hated Frenchmen was pope and held his court on French soil at Avignon. They were spending life and treasure in a glorious but costly warfare, and French ecclesiastics were draining away yearly from the realm enormous sums which were declared to be greater in amount than the whole of the royal revenue. No wonder that the 'good Parliament' should recommend that 'no papal collector or proctor should remain in England upon pain of life and limb, and that no Englishman, on the like pain, should become

such collector or proctor, or remain at the court of Rome.'

The time was to come for this, but not yet. The religious liberty must dawn before the financial plunder and the shameful foreign dependence should cease.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the English Church was altogether opposed to such sentiments as these. Through the larger part of this period of our history the leading statesmen and administrators were ecclesiastics. Indeed, the great officers of state, diplomatists and others, were commonly supported by Church preferments, bestowed upon them for maintenance or reward for services. Such men frequently heartily concurred with the Commons, and even were willing to lead their action, in the continual efforts of these centuries to place legislative checks upon the rapacity of papal extortion. Nor was it likely that the clergy, compelled to contribute in Convocation largely to the king's necessities, should accept with equanimity the growing demands of the papal officials.

To a great extent Wycliffe may thus be regarded as having the nation with him. But he had already transgressed the bounds which the bishops felt they could safely overlook, and the year after the 'good Parliament,' 1377, he was summoned to appear before Convocation in St. Paul's to answer for heretical opinions. Wycliffe was supported by John of Gaunt, and the only result was a riot. It may be that Courtenay, then bishop of London, who presided, and was rather a politician than a divine, had no wish to push the matter to extremities. The same year Edward III. died, and the young Richard II. succeeded. The difficulties of a regency, and other political complications, drew men's minds from doctrinal differences to which, indeed, they

were scarcely yet awake, and Wycliffe seems to have been subjected for some time to no public proceedings.

Indeed the first Parliament of Richard II., 1377, trod in the steps of its predecessor and insisted on more rigorous proceedings against all papal provisions, as well as the expulsion of aliens, religious or other, from the realm, and the use of their property in carrying on the French war. It is even said<sup>1</sup> that the case was submitted to the judgment of Wycliffe himself how far such an application of funds drawn from England by French ecclesiastics was lawful. Wycliffe argued the question partly on grounds of reason, and partly on deductions from Scripture. He urged that the nation, clergy and people, is one body, to which God had given the land and its treasures for its own use, benefit, and support, and it must therefore be lawful for it to detain its own treasure for defence in case of necessity. He then argued from Scripture that lordship and dominion were forbidden to the Apostles, and could be no part of the heritage of those who claimed to succeed them. 'If thou be a lord,' said he, 'thou shalt lose thine apostleship; or if thou wilt be an apostle, thou shalt lose thy lordship: for truly thou shalt depart from the one of them.'

The man who had taken so prominent a place in the antipapal ranks was by this time marked at the Papal Court, and in this year, 1377, five bulls<sup>2</sup> (if it is technically correct so to style them) were issued by the pope—three to the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London, one to the king, and one to Oxford, censuring the laxity which had permitted such heretical teaching to pass unrebuked, and requiring immediate proceedings against its author.

<sup>1</sup> *Fasc. Zizan.*, p. xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> Vaughan, p. 200; *Fasc. Zizan.*, p. xxx.



There seems to have been little willingness to move on the part of any of these authorities. Oxford showed itself peculiarly averse to act against its most illustrious member. But it was incumbent on the archbishop to take some steps in the matter. Accordingly Wycliffe was summoned to appear before a synod at Lambeth in April 1378.

The proceedings there also fell to the ground, partly on account of the people of London, comprising many leading citizens, forcing their way in and making their voices heard on the Reformer's side, and partly because of an injunction from the queen-mother inhibiting further proceedings. But it was to this synod that Wycliffe presented a paper in answer to the charges against him on which many of the imputations on his firmness have been based.

Men have said that it was a sophistical and evasive document. Possibly if some only of the heads are taken by themselves it may be open to the charge. But it is simply that the great scholastic divine is choosing his own ground. He seems to play with the first items with something of the word-play of the schools, in its way as delicate a fence as that of the swordsman. But when he approaches the last items of the charge he drops the mere fence, and strikes home. He asserts<sup>1</sup> that 'it is lawful for kings, in cases limited by law, to take away the temporalities from churchmen who habitually abuse them'—and he argues that it may be a work of charity to do so. He further declares that this may be done in spite of excommunication or other Church censure, since such gifts are not absolute but on condition of spiritual service. Lastly, he adds 'that ecclesiastics, even the pope himself,

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan, p. 211.



may on some accounts be corrected by their subjects, and for the benefit of the Church be impleaded by both clergy and laity.' He argues this from the peccability of the pope and the consequent necessity, in the supposable case of his fault, of some means of correction and redress. This surely is sufficiently plain speaking in a man standing where he did through the action of a papal bull. Several years passed in comparative tranquillity for Wycliffe. On the suppression of Wat Tyler's insurrection Courtenay succeeded to the primacy. The teaching of Wycliffe had by this time become more distinctly heretical in the Roman sense, and the doctrine of transubstantiation had been assailed in no measured language. Courtenay was rather a statesman than a divine, but such teaching as this could no longer be overlooked by an archbishop who wore the Roman pallium. He summoned a council of leading divines to meet in the Chapter House of the Black Friars in May 1382. He laid before this assembly and submitted to their judgment twenty-four propositions said to be affirmed by Wycliffe. The first three of these deny transubstantiation or any corporal presence in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Others relate to papal and other ecclesiastical jurisdictions, to the obligation of tithes, to the mendicant friars, to the duty of preaching, and many other subjects. Some of them, as they now stand, are obviously malicious misrepresentations; for example, the seventh item, 'that God ought to obey the devil,' is a manifest absurdity, a distortion of a paradoxical utterance of the Reformer. The result of the deliberations of this assembly was a document in which it was declared that 'some of the said conclusions were heretical, and some erroneous and contrary to the determination of the Church.' Proclamation was made

to this effect from St. Paul's Cross, and excommunication denounced against all who should thereafter defend them.

This was followed not long afterwards by a statute against the itinerant preachers who disseminated doctrines akin to those of Wycliffe. Although irregularly enacted, and protested against in the next session of Parliament, this earliest law against heresy remained on the statute-book.

It recited that divers evil persons within the realm went from county to county and from town to town, under dissimulation of great holiness, preaching daily in churches, churchyards, markets, fairs, and other open places divers sermons containing heresies and notorious errors, to the great emblemishing of the Christian faith. That these persons disobeyed the summons and monitions of the bishops, and by their subtil and ingenious words drew the people to hear their sermons and maintain them in their errors by strong hand and great routs. The sheriffs and other royal officers were therefore directed to arrest such persons on certificate of the bishops and to imprison them until ecclesiastically cleared.

This was the first in a long series of disastrous acts of interference with religious liberty on the part of the state. There is some satisfaction in knowing that the Commons of England at least protested that it was 'never authorized by them, and it never was their meaning to bind themselves or their successors to the prelates, any more than their ancestors had done before them.' The protest was vain, and the bishops retained that hold on the civil power by which sad events before long were to occur in England.

Archbishop Courtenay proceeded, in spite of considerable opposition, to purge Oxford of heresy. Nicholas

Hereford and Philip Repingdon, the most prominent adherents of Wycliffe, were compelled to recant. Repingdon died a cardinal and bishop of Lincoln; Hereford was subjected to prolonged imprisonment. Wycliffe is also said to have answered in person at Oxford on the question of the Eucharistic presence, but the time and circumstances stand in great doubt. Different accounts are given of his conduct under these perilous circumstances. He has been even accused of recantation. Dr. Vaughan<sup>1</sup> maintains that a careful examination of his explanation and defence both in English and Latin will satisfy us that he firmly repeated the same doctrine which he had taught for some time past. Dean Milman considers that he put forth his 'acuteness, subtilty, and logical versatility, in which he was perhaps the greatest and most experienced master in the University,' and thus perplexed and bewildered his auditory, who gave the most contradictory accounts of it. But the dean acquits him of disingenuousness or even of politic art, asserting that 'his view of the Eucharist is singularly consistent. The Eucharist is Christ's body and blood spiritually, sacramentally; but the bread and wine are not annihilated by transmutation.' This may be sufficient to convince us that no recantation was made, and that in the most august presence in England Wycliffe testified for what he believed to be the truth of God. He who declared as he did in the elaborate statement in question that 'he dare not say that the bread is the body of Christ essentially, substantially, corporally, or identically, did in plain words deny the Roman doctrine, and would undoubtedly a few years later have been sent to the stake. His doctrine was condemned, but he remained at his

<sup>1</sup> Vaughan, p. 310; but see *Fusc. Zizan.*, p. xliv.



rectory at Lutterworth unmolested, where he died two years afterwards. What influence shielded him is not known. But the temper of the Commons, and of not a few powerful nobles, may have induced a statesman of Courtenay's calibre to judge it expedient that nothing should bring into greater prominence so distinguished a patriot. As yet all that the English law permitted for such an offender was imprisonment, and the warrant for that must be sued out in Chancery at the instance of a bishop by the recent statute. It may be doubted how far such permission would have been allowed in the existing temper of the nation. This is sufficient to dispose of many imputations which have been cast on Wycliffe's firmness; such as Milner, for example, unhappily allowed himself to make: 'Such severity of censure ought to be accompanied with the spirit of martyrdom. In this Wycliffe was deficient.' Against this we may place Dean Milman's fairer judgment: 'No one can doubt that he would have shown the dauntlessness of a martyr. But there was as yet no statute in England for burning heretics; no officer, without legal warrant, would have obeyed, as in other countries, the mandate of the Church.'

There is in existence a great mass of MSS. attributed to Wycliffe, some of them no doubt by his followers, but many genuine. It is impossible to say how many works, some of them indeed very brief, were the produce of his indefatigable industry. But it is said that 200 were burned by order of the Council of Constance; and an inspection of the list compiled by Dr. Vaughan, even allowing to the utmost for those wrongly<sup>1</sup> ascribed to him, will give some idea of the fecundity of his pen. He may be said to have been master of two

<sup>1</sup> Shirley, *Fæc. Zizan.*, p. xlii.



styles: the one the hard dry logic of the schools, repulsive to most modern readers; the other clear idiomatic English, with a large proportion of good old Saxon words now lost to use, but in construction nearly approaching the subsequent settled form of the English language, as indeed the reader of his contemporary Chaucer would expect. Whatever of terseness and point, downright earnestness, and deep convictions can give to the utterances of a powerful mind, *that* may be heard ringing through Wycliffe's English discourses.

But to leave the subject of his style with this somewhat vague account, and especially with Dean Milman's words regarding his 'subtilty and logical versatility,' would leave an unfair impression with regard to this great and independent genius. The verbal niceties and metaphysical distinctions which gather round any discussion on the nature of the presence in the Eucharist are such as constrain the divine of the present day to travel over the same ground as Wycliffe traversed. As it was in Wycliffe's days, so it was when Bishop Ridley stood on his defence, and so it is in modern controversy on the nature of that sacrament.

The materialist, whether of that day or of this, seems incapable of conceiving any mode of presence but the gross and corporal. Deny this, and he assumes his opponent to contradict the words of Christ, 'This is my body,' and to evaporate the sacrament into an empty figure. Against this Wycliffe and Ridley in their days earnestly pleaded. Against this the 25th and 28th Articles of the Church of England protest. In so delicate an investigation it is manifest that definitions are of primary importance. Some of the scholastic expressions are now obsolete; but it will surprise many readers to find how much of Wycliffe's clear arrange-

ment and masterly investigation of the nature of the presence in the Eucharist in the fourth book of his 'Trialogus' are precisely what we need in the present day. The words *quantity*, the *how-much-ness* of a thing, and *quality*, the *what-sort-ness*, have survived. The word *quiddity*, the *whatness*, has passed away. But if not precisely in the scholastic terms, when we handle the same subject, 'Many are the errors into which men have fallen with regard to the quiddity of this sensible sacrament.' It is this *quiddity* into which he enters with such force and clearness. *Quid*: What is the promised presence, how far is the bodily presence of Christ universal; what is the element when consecrated? Is it bread still? Is it flesh? Is it in any sense, and in what sense, the body of Christ? Such are the questions handled, gravely, seriously with much point, but with no undue subtilty. If the Latin be somewhat uncouth and rugged, according to the language of the schools, it was out of this clear thinking, and this vigorous dispersion of the clouds of metaphysics in which the subject had been wrapped, that Wycliffe's English teaching came forth bright and emphatic. By no other process save this same means of clear reason and Scripture definition, can the modern teacher hope to avoid entanglement in the same toils, as diligently spun now as they have ever been.

A brief summary only of Wycliffe's religious opinions as they were finally matured can find space within these limits; but it is not impossible to present brief extracts from his works which may fairly represent his sentiments. It may be succinctly stated that he abandoned the whole sacramental theory of the schoolmen, and approached very nearly to the sacramental system of the Reformed English Church.

Something has already been said of the nature of his teaching on the Eucharist. With regard to Baptism,<sup>1</sup> he taught that baptism was necessary, but that the mode of its administration mattered not; 'for it is certain that bodily baptism is of no avail unless there goes with it the washing of the mind by the Holy Spirit from original or actual sin.' 'I think it probable that Christ might, without any such washing, spiritually baptize, and by consequence save infants.' 'The baptism of fire is the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is absolutely necessary to every man if he is to be saved. . . . So then, without doubt, if this unseen baptism be performed, the man so baptized is cleansed from guilt; and if this be wanting, the baptism availeth not to save the soul.' If it be desired to understand the singular clearness with which Wycliffe distinguishes between what he holds to be a probable deduction from Scripture, and therefore a fair opinion, and what he distinctly sees in Holy Scripture, a better example could scarcely be found than the moderation with which in this part of the 'Trialogus' he handles these darker questions about Baptism.

Confirmation in the Roman sense of a 'conferring of the Holy Ghost,' he rejects very much as our own Church does (Article XXV.) as 'a corrupt following of the Apostles.' He says that it is 'blasphemy.' 'The Apostles dared not so to teach, but prayed for themselves that they might receive the Holy Ghost.'

On the intermediate state he does not seem to have advanced so far as on some other points of doctrine. The following passage occurs in a work written not long before his death: 'Saying of mass, with cleanness of life and burning devotion, pleaseth God Almighty, and

<sup>1</sup> *Trialogus*, b. iv.



is profitable to Christian souls in Purgatory and to men living on earth that they may withstand temptations to sin.' But this is in accordance with the rest of his teaching on the Eucharist ; the Mass was profitable, not as a sacrifice propitiatory, but as a high act of worship and communion, in which faith drew near to God in Christ seeking the covenant blessing. Otherwise he said of the ungodly man, ' Let him have never so many thousand bulls of indulgence, and thousands of masses from priests and monks and friars, and it shall be in vain.'

With regard to Orders,<sup>1</sup> he ' confidently asserts that in the primitive Church, or the time of Paul, two orders were held sufficient—those of priests and deacons. No less certain am I that in the time of Paul presbyter and bishop were the same, as is shown 1 Tim. iii. and Tit. i.' ' As to all the disputes about higher functionaries, I shall say nothing ; it is enough for me that, according to Scripture, the presbyters and the deacons retain that office and standing which Christ appointed them, because I am convinced that Cæsarean pride has introduced these orders and gradations. If they had been necessary to the Church, Christ and His apostles would not have held their peace about them.'

The whole fabric of Church government from the pope downwards he thus condemned as being destitute of Scriptural basis. He seems to have considered that whole system to be the Anti-Christ of Scripture. The pope, or any worldly prelate or priest, he freely styles Anti-Christ when regarded as the representative of the system which demanded obedience to the law of man rather than the law of Scripture. Thus regarded, the pope himself was in a way of eminence *the Anti-Christ*,

<sup>1</sup> *Triologus*, b. iv



as the head and representative of that system, and his laws, as distinguished from the revealed Word of God, were 'the laws of Anti-Christ.'

While thus stigmatising the whole sacerdotal system of mediæval Christianity as unscriptural and false, Wycliffe does not seem to have thought out any plan of Church government which might have taken its place. The moderate episcopalianism of the English Church, with its basis in primitive antiquity, and with its Scriptural limitations, was never presented to his mind. Perhaps reform seemed too remote to induce him to think of reconstruction. The only arrangement which seems to have been carried on under his direction or countenance was one for itinerant preachers, whom he calls poor priests, and against whom was expressly aimed the first of the persecuting statutes already mentioned. These priests are spoken of in several of Wycliffe's treatises, especially in his tract, 'Why Poor Priests have no Benefices.' It appears to be intended as an answer to the charges brought against them based upon their wandering lives. He declares that it was against their consciences to hold a living, or at least to seek one. The patron, whether prelate or layman, expected some simoniacal return, if not a payment in money to themselves, yet perhaps indirectly, 'kerchiefs for the lady, or a palfrey, or a tun of wine.' Then fees for many grades of officers were demanded, and entertainments of various kinds. According to Wycliffe's teaching, this was robbing the poor, since the residue of the Church funds, after providing for the priests' maintenance, was theirs. Letters also were frequently arriving from the ordinary commanding the curate on holy days 'to summon and curse poor men for nought except the covetousness of the clerks of

Anti-Christ.' Another reason which prevailed on them to decline a benefice was the restraint which it would place upon their ministrations. Without that clog 'they most surely help themselves and serve their brethren, and they are free to fly from one city to another, when they are persecuted by the clerks of Anti-Christ, as Christ biddeth and the Gospel.' Thus, he says, 'some poor priests think with God to travel about where they shall most profit, and by the evidence that God giveth them while they have time and a little bodily strength and youth.' Still Wycliffe himself was not of the number of these evangelists: he belonged to the order of stated parish priests, of whom he says: 'They (the poor priests) condemn not curates, who do well their office, and dwell where they shall most profit, and teach truly and stably the law of God, against false prophets and the accursed deceptions of the fiend.'

On the subject of the entire sufficiency of Holy Scripture his doctrine<sup>1</sup> was identical with that of the Seventh Article of the Reformed Church of England. 'Every truth,' said he, 'which is not manifest to the Christian from the simple evidence of his senses, should be deduced from Scripture, at least if the faithful are to place credence in it. And then the Scriptures would be held in reverence, and the papal bulls superseded, as they ought to be.' This one principle it was that swept away as intrusive and vain so large a part of Roman religion. 'Foolish must he be,' wrote Wycliffe, 'who, instead of clinging to Christ alone, seeks the mediation of some other, for Christ ever lives near the Father, and is the most ready to intercede for us, imparting Himself to the soul of every wayfaring pilgrim

<sup>1</sup> *Triologus*, b. iii.

who loves him. Therefore should no man seek first the mediation of other saints, for He is more ready to help than any one of them. . . . It seems a folly to leave the fountain which is assuredly more ready to bestow itself on every one, and turn away to the distant and troubled brook.'

When looking round on the widespread immorality of the clerical orders, and on the corruption of doctrine, Wycliffe was induced to trace it in no small degree to the inordinate wealth of the Church. The demon of avarice seemed to him to taint everything with its presence. An evangelical poverty was the model which he set forth for the reformation of the Church. He taught that the civil power ought to confiscate these ill-gotten and perilous riches. In setting forth these ideas the principle on which he based his teaching was to this effect. The supreme lordship of all is in God. He grants the conditional possession of certain gifts to some of His creatures, the condition being that they render to Him the due suit and service of a holy and obedient life. The clergy who fail to render that service have forfeited their rights, and their revenues may be taken from them. There is a sense in which all things belong to Christ's people. He is heir of all things, and in Him 'all things are theirs.' But, said Wycliffe,<sup>1</sup> 'civil possession differs widely from such a title.' His contention was, not that 'the laws of the state, and the custom of secular rulers' in matters of property, should be infringed, but that the clergy were bound to abstain from 'possession in a civil sense, since it necessitates a carefulness about temporal things.' Still he says that they 'may possess temporal things, but only after that title and mode of possession which

<sup>1</sup> *Triologus*, b. iv.



God instituted.' His theory seems somewhat vague. He had a keen perception of the great evils which inordinate wealth and worldly power had brought upon the Church, and appears to have held a strict Voluntary system to be the perfect ideal. Some have charged him with inconsistency in writing thus whilst himself drawing the tithes of his good rectory. But that is not his own view. He would have incurred his own censure had he drawn into court a recalcitrant tithe-payer, or demurred to the action of the civil power in recalling the whole endowment. But, otherwise he condemned no man for receiving his sufficient maintenance rendered to him willingly as a servant labouring in the cause of that Master to whom the lordship of all belonged. It is obvious that theories of this kind could easily be represented as dangerous and revolutionary, and that anarchists might readily pervert them to their own purposes. Yet Wycliffe himself allowed no such consequence,<sup>1</sup> holding the civil right to property as distinct and indubitable. But that some sort of communism characterised the wild preaching of some who were called followers of Wycliffe, and who thought they found some colour for their teaching in his writings, is certain.

No argument for persecution prevailed more with men in power in the days which followed, than the charge which the ecclesiastical party brought against Wycliffe and the Lollards, of a contempt for the rights of property.

Some have attempted to deprive Wycliffe of the honour of being the first to give to his countrymen the Bible in their own tongue. Whatever traces may be found of some attempts at partial translations in those

<sup>1</sup> Shirley, *Pasc. Zizan.*, p. lxii.



ages, it is clear, from the words of the contemporary writing under the name of Knighton, what the clergy of that time thought on this point.<sup>1</sup> 'Christ,' says he, 'delivered his Gospel to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might administer to the laity and to weaker persons, according to the states of the times and the wants of men. But this Master John Wycliffe translated it out of Latin into the tongue Anglican not angelic. Thus it became of itself vulgar, more open to the laity, and to women, who could read, than it usually is to the clergy even the most learned and intelligent. In this way the Gospel-pearl is cast abroad and trodden under foot of swine, and that which was before precious both to clergy and to laity is rendered, as it were, the common jest of both.'

This was the judgment of contemporaries as to the originality of Wycliffe's work. It has been contested on the authority of Sir Thomas More, who asserted that the whole Bible had been translated into English long before the days of Wycliffe, and that he himself had seen copies of it. This assertion has been adopted by many writers. But a careful investigation of manuscripts has led to the sounder opinion that More was misled by observing the diversities which are to be seen between different copies of Wycliffe's Bible, and particularly by the fact that there are two distinct versions of it, as will be seen presently.

Moreover, though there are metrical and other versions of the Psalter and some portions of the Scripture older than Wycliffe, no trace can be found of a translation such as Sir Thomas More alleges that he had seen. 'It admits,<sup>2</sup> therefore, of no reasonable doubt

<sup>1</sup> Knighton, *De Event. Ang.*, col. 2644.

<sup>2</sup> Sir F. Madden, *Preface to Wycliff's Bible*, Oxford, 1850.

that Wycliffe's is the earliest translation of the whole Bible in the English language.'

The New Testament seems to have been translated by Wycliffe himself. The greater part of the Old Testament may have been chiefly from the hand of Nicholas Hereford, one of his most able Oxford coadjutors, the completion of it being by Wycliffe. The two styles are different. Hereford translates the Latin very literally, while Wycliffe uses a more flowing and easy style. This first version was scarcely published before the necessity was seen for its revision. This was done by Purvey the leading Lollard, when Wycliffe was dead, probably assisted by Hereford, Ashton, Parker, and Swinderby. To this translation a General Prologue was prefixed explaining the principles on which the revision was made. The object was 'to make the version more correct, intelligible, and popular.' These two versions of Wycliffe's Bible are printed in parallel columns in the Oxford edition.

There is a peculiar force and lifelike vigour in these translations, which may well be thought to have been transferred by Tindal into his own, and so to have passed through him into the more modern English version. Of this peculiar excellence a slight specimen may be given from Genesis xxvii., the only liberty taken for the sake of general readers being the change of a very few of the more absolutely antiquated forms and words:—'Isaac forsooth was old, and his eyes waxed dark, and he might not see. And he called Esau, his more son, and said to him, My son! The which answered, I am nigh. To whom the father, Thou seest, he saith, that I am waxen old, and know not the day of my death. Take thine arms, quiver and bow, and go forth out: and when thou hast with hunting any-

thing taken, make to me thereof a dish as thou knowest me to will, and bring to me that I eat, that my soul bless thee ere I die. The which when Rebecca had heard, and he was gone away into the field, that he fulfil the behest of his father, she said to her son Jacob, I heard thy father speaking with Esau thy brother, and saying to him, Bring to me of thy hunting and make meat that I eat, and I shall bless thee before the Lord ere I die. Now then assent to my counsels, my son, and going to the flock bring to me two the best kids, that I make of them meat to thy father, the which he eat gladly; the which when thou bringest in and he eateth, he bless thee ere he die. To whom he answered, Thou hast known that Esau my brother is a man full of hair, and I soft: if my father grope and feel, I dread lest he ween me will to beguile him, and bring on me malison for benison.

‘To whom the mother, On me be, she saith, this malison, my son; only hear my voice, and going forth bring to me that I said.

‘He went away, and brought to, and gave to his mother. She made ready meats, as she knew the father of him would, and with the clothes of Esau full good, the which she had anent her at home, she clothed him. And she did about his hands little skins of kids, and she forcovered the nakedness of the neck, and gave the dish and took the loaves that she had baked. The which things brought to, said, Father mine! and he answered, I here; who art thou, son mine? And Jacob said, I am Esau, thy first begotten, I have done to thee as thou hast commanded me; arise, sit, and eat of mine hunting that thy soul bless me. Then Isaac to his son, How, he saith, so soon find thou mightest, son mine? The which answered, The will of God was that



soon it should come to me that I would. And Isaac said, Come near hither, that I touch thee, son mine, and prove whether thou be my son Esau or nay. He came near to the father; and him groped, said Isaac, The voice forsooth is the voice of Jacob, but the hands be the hands of Esau. And he knew him not, for the hairy hands expressed the likeness of the more.'

Wycliffe's Bible was suppressed, as far as authority could do it in the severities against the Lollards, in the fifteenth century. Nevertheless Purvey's revision 'was eagerly sought after and read. Copies passed into the hands of all classes of the people.' Some were written on vellum in the most expensive manner. Nearly one hundred-and-fifty MSS., most of which were written within forty years after its publication, were examined when the Oxford edition of 1850 was prepared. When the vast destruction of ancient MSS. during past centuries is remembered, and the search made for the Wycliffe writings in particular is borne in mind, this survival may give some idea of the avidity with which the precious book was once cherished.

Those who delight in specially distinguishing some energetic Reformers with the epithet 'foul-mouthed' and the like may, perhaps, qualify their severity when they consider in the following extracts the school in which such men had formerly been trained. Archbishop Arundel<sup>1</sup> is writing to the pope, and thus adapts his phraseology to his correspondent:—

'This is that pestilent wretch of damnable memory, John Wycliffe, son of the old serpent, yea, the forerunner and disciple of Anti-Christ, who, while he lived, walking in the vanity of his mind not knowing how to direct his steps in the way of righteousness, chose not

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii. p. 350.



only to despise the sacred canons and admonitions of the fathers, but also to rend with the efforts of a viper the womb of his holy mother as far as he was able. . . He, as the complement of his wickedness, invented a new translation of the Scriptures into his mother tongue.' Or the record may be quoted in which Walsingham<sup>1</sup> noted the death of Wycliffe. 'In the year 1385, on the festival of St. Thomas of Canterbury, died the instrument of the devil, the enemy of the Church, the disturber of the people, the idol of heretics, the model of hypocrites, the renewer of schism, the prompter of falsehood, the sink of flattery, John Wycliffe. Struck by the dreadful wrath of God, he was seized with paralysis in his whole body, but his hateful life endured until St. Silvester's day. On that day he breathed out his wicked spirit into the realm of darkness. Justly was he stricken on the day of St. Thomas whom he had so often blasphemed with his tongue of venom. Justly was he condemned by temporal death on the day of St. Silvester whom he had provoked by his frequent invectives.' Let us disapprove abusive language wherever it may be found : it 'worketh not the righteousness of God.' But let the balance be true : however strongly the Reformers may write, they were for the most part gentle in their words in comparison with those who had taught them in the old religion.

A synod of 1408 headed by Archbishop Arundel passed this decree<sup>2</sup>:—'We enact and ordain, that no one henceforth do, by his own authority, translate any text of Holy Scripture into the English tongue, or into any other, by way of book or treatise ; nor let any book or treatise now lately composed in the time of John

<sup>1</sup> *Hypodig. Neust.*, A.D. 1385.

<sup>2</sup> *Wilkins, Concilia*, iii. 317.

Wycliffe, or since, or hereafter to be composed, be read in whole or in part, in public or in private, under pain of the greater excommunication.' Notwithstanding all this, Wycliffe's Bible continued to be circulated in whole or in parts, until the printed Bibles of the Reformation period superseded it. Its work was then done, and gathered in before the throne of God where it will one day be made manifest.

Wycliffe was laid to rest in his church of Lutterworth. The arches are still there through which his voice resounded, and the same windows cast the light of heaven on the pavement, but his remains are not there. Some forty-eight years after, in pursuance of a decree of the Council of Constance, the officials of the diocese of Lincoln effected the disinterment of the great Englishman. They carried his bones to the river side, and there they burned them to dust, and flung them upon the stream of the Swift. It was a foul deed, but out of it the quaint Fuller<sup>1</sup> drew an emblem of his true glory which, hackneyed as it is, must not miss quotation : 'The Swift conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over.'

It may be the most convenient arrangement to trace here the current of Wycliffe's teaching, until it is merged in the broader sea of the Reformation, mixing it as little as may be with the general history of the times. We shall thus attain to a clearer idea of the extent in which the work of Wycliffe was leavening English opinion during the eventful century and a half which must yet elapse ere the great change should come.

<sup>1</sup> *Church Hist.*, iv. 2, 54.

If we were to accept the heated statement of the contemporary writing under the name of Knighton,<sup>1</sup> we must believe that in 1382 'Lollards were held in such honour, and had multiplied to such a degree that you could scarcely see two men in the road without one of them being a disciple of Wycliffe.' He says that, 'springing like saplings from the root of a tree, they were multiplied, and filled every place within the compass of the kingdom.' These and similar statements of Walsingham are no doubt substantially true if by Lollard is meant one who opposed the pecuniary claims and extortions of the pope. On that subject Englishmen in those times could use very strong language in Parliament and elsewhere, as we have already seen. And they never forgot it, though many years were yet to pass before the Eighth Henry arose to carry out what had been the English verdict for more than a century. But if we mean by Lollard a man who was resolved to take the Word of God rather than the papal law for his guide, the history which has yet to be traced will show their scanty power and their limited numbers.

Something must be added about the fate of Wycliffe's immediate associates. Repington recanted at Oxford in 1382; he afterwards became Bishop of Lincoln, and is said to have proceeded actively against the Lollards. Hereford, who had so large a share in the original work of translation, after tedious prosecutions and several imprisonments, died in the Carthusian monastery<sup>2</sup> at Coventry. Ashton and Purvey were among the most able of Wycliffe's followers. Both were the subject of ecclesiastical proceedings. Their end is uncertain.

The first statute against the Lollards has already

<sup>1</sup> Knighton, *De Event. Ang.*, col. 2666 and 2663.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to Wycliffe's Bible, 27, note.



been named as irregularly enacted in 1382. It sanctioned the imprisonment of persons charged with heresy at the instance of a bishop. Under this law not a few were cited and imprisoned. Foxe in particular names Swinderby, a priest in the diocese of Lincoln, and Brute, a Welshman, as prominent amongst these sufferers. Many interesting particulars have been collected by the martyrologist recording their opinions, often strangely eccentric in details. The Welshman<sup>1</sup> adds to the innumerable shades of interpretation which have been thrown over the Apocalypse what may be styled the patriotic Welsh view. According to him, of all nations the ancient Britons received the Gospel in early times most readily, and maintained it most faithfully. Of them Isaiah prophesied, and of them St. John in the Revelation wrote. The woman who brought forth the man-child and fled into a wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God for a thousand two hundred and sixty days, was the British Church, which fled into the wilderness of Wales, and continued there 1,260 years in the faith of Christ. Nevertheless the stout Welshman, 'Walter Brute, sinner, layman, husbandman, and a Christian of the Britons,' as he styled himself, after a long and vigorous contention for the supremacy of Scripture, was compelled to make his submission in public to the judgment of the Bishop of Hereford. What further became of him does not appear.

Letters patent<sup>2</sup> of Richard II. in the same year, 1382, will further illustrate the action of the State against heresy before the severer statutes were decreed. They were to the following effect:—

'We have understood from a petition of the venerable father, William, Archbishop of Canterbury, that

<sup>1</sup> Foxe, A.D. 1392.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, iii. 156.



many conclusions contrary to sound doctrine and the Catholic faith have been in divers places publicly preached—some of these being heretical, some errors condemned by the Church. Whereupon for the repression and punishment of those who preach the like, or obstinately maintain them, we think fit to oppose to them the arm of our royal authority. Therefore, being filled with zeal for the Catholic faith, and being unwilling that such heresies or errors should germinate within our dominions, we grant and commit special authority to the said archbishop and his suffragans to arrest and detain all such offenders in their own prisons or any other that may seem good to them. Such imprisonment shall continue until the accused repent of their errors and heresies, or until we or our council have dealt with their case. We further command all our officers and lieges, on their faith and allegiance, that they favour or aid in any manner no preachers or maintainers of such condemned doctrines, under pain of forfeiture of all which in such a case may be forfeited; but rather that they humbly obey and give good heed to the said archbishop and his suffragans and officers.’

For nearly twenty years this amount of power either satisfied the bishops, or was all which the State would concede. But worse times followed. In the year 1401 the Act ‘*de hæretico comburendo*’ was enacted by Parliament. The degree in which, before that Act, the civil power might deal with heresy as an offence for which it could hold men accountable is not clear. But it is certain that the kings of England held it to be their duty to defend the Catholic faith; and that the severity which their prerogative might exercise in such a cause had in their minds no strict legal bounds. This sufficiently appears from the foregoing letters of Richard II.

But what the written law sanctioned up to this time is a different question. It may be that alarm at the subversive principles propagated among the lower orders, which were attributed by his enemies to Wycliffe's teaching, had affected men's minds. It may be that the insecure title of Henry IV. disposed him to make concessions to conciliate the support of the clergy. But, for whatever reasons, the Act '*de hæretico comburendo*' was passed, and entirely changed the course of English law in this respect for the next century and a half. By this Act the bishop, sitting alone, might convict of heresy;<sup>1</sup> 'and unless the convict abjured his opinions, or if after abjuration he relapsed, the sheriff was bound *ex officio*, if required by the bishop, to commit the unhappy victim to the flames, without waiting for the consent of the Crown.' Who should be accounted heretics was left to the uncontrolled discretion of the Church authority, the words of the statute only describing them as 'teachers of erroneous opinions, contrary to the faith and blessed determinations of Holy Church.'

Under this Act and the preceding one authorising imprisonment for offenders of this class, the Wycliffite movement in its more conspicuous manifestations was speedily and effectually checked.

Oxford had been already reduced to submission. The first of these laws had been aimed specially at Wycliffe's itinerant preachers, 'the poor priests,'<sup>2</sup> whom it accused of preaching in all parts of the country to the disturbance of the faith of the people. They seem to have been practically suppressed. The names of some of them occur in the earlier lists of sufferers by fire, and more of them are found amongst those who

<sup>1</sup> Blackstone, iv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See pages 306, 313.

were compelled to abjure. The proceedings against the Lollards, with the form of abjuration, occupy many pages of the Records.<sup>1</sup> Among the most saddening there to be found are the trial of Sawtrey<sup>2</sup> on manifold charges of heresy, his recantation, his subsequent relapse, his degradation from the priesthood, and, finally, his delivery to the secular court with a coloured cap on his head as a layman, stripped of all clerical character and privilege, with the well-known request that 'the court would favourably regard' the victim.

Let those who have no misgiving as to their own strength sneer at Sawtrey's submission. He led the way through the flames.

If one narrative out of the touching histories of these martyrdoms may be given, it shall be taken not from the pages of Foxe, but of a monk, that it may be known with what hardness men can write. A certain smith, in the year 1410, had denied the corporal presence in the Sacrament. He was condemned, and about to be shut up in a hogshead to be burned in Smithfield. Henry, Prince of Wales, was there, and advised him to recant. 'But<sup>3</sup> the abandoned villain declined the prince's advice, and chose rather to be burned than give reverence to the life-giving Sacrament. Wherefore he is shut up in the cask, is tormented by the devouring flame, and howls miserably in the midst of the fire. The prince, moved by his horrible cry, ordered the fire to be removed. He consoled him all but dead as he was. He promised life and pardon and three pence a day from the royal treasury as long as he should live if he would recant. But the wretch recovering his breath rejected the offer, hardened without doubt by some malignant

<sup>1</sup> See Wilkins, iii. 225-263, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>3</sup> Walsingham, *Hypodig. Neust.*, ann. 1410.



spirit. Wherefore the prince ordered him to be shut up again in the cask with no farther mercy. So it befel that this mischievous fellow was burnt to ashes, and died miserably in his sin.' That is the record which was written in the abbey of St. Alban. Another was written at the same time. It has not been opened yet; but can it be doubted that such faithfulness is inscribed in letters of light in the Lamb's Book of Life?

From the fatal moment of the enactment of the statute *de hæretico comburendo*, may be traced the stream of fire and blood flowing onwards through English soil until the detestable statute was finally repealed by Elizabeth. Not that even then persecution sheathed its sword, but it was no longer this Act upon which its baleful form took its stand. It is needful to track the course of that terrible stream that we may know what Englishmen have done and suffered for the truth of God. And accordingly a slight chronological table of the dates of the sufferers by fire is appended. It is, of course, taken from the great collections of the indefatigable John Foxe, who diligently searched all accessible registers, and whose general accuracy (at least as men then understood accuracy) apart from details too readily sometimes admitted, has never been shaken by his numerous assailants. Such a table will run in this wise:—

- 1401. William Sautre: John Badby.
- 1415. John Claydon: Richard Turming.
- 1418. Lord Cobham.
- 1423. William Taylor.
- 1428. Father Abraham: William White: John Waddon.
- 1430. Richard Hoveden.
- 1431. Thomas Bagley.
- 1440. Richard Wiche.
- 1494. Joan Boughton.
- 1498. A priest unnamed.
- 1499. Babram.



- 1500. An old man unnamed.
- 1506. William Tylsworth : Roberts.
- 1507. Thomas Barnard : James Morden : and Thomas Norris.
- 1508. Laurence Guest, and a woman unnamed.
- 1511. William Sweeting : James Brewster.
- 1517. John Browne.
- 1518. John Stilman : Thomas Man : Christopher Shoemaker.
- 1519. Mistress Smith : Robert Hatchets : Archer : Hawkins :  
Thomas Bond : Wrigsham : Landsdale, in one fire at  
Coventry.
- 1521. Thomas Bernard : James Morden : Robert Rave : John  
Scrivener : Robert Silkeb.
- 1530. Thomas Hitten.
- 1531. Richard Bayfield : John Tewkesbury.
- 1532. James Bainham : John Bent : Thomas Harding.

Here we may perhaps pause, not because the Act had exhausted its fiery arsenal, but because the Wycliffite stream here becomes merged in the great current of the English Reformation, and the names of the victims belong to a new and distinct phase of English history. It may be that some slight oversight may be found in the list. It may be that even the diligence of Foxe was not exhaustive in searching the fiery records. But in any case it must be near the truth. Foxe appeals not only to the Court Registers, but to the memories of those who had heard many graphic and terrible stories of the past generations. It must be added that these names do not exhaust the list of the sufferers. Very large numbers were summoned before the bishops and compelled to recant, and undergo degrading penances and imprisonments. Not a few of those who finally ended their lives in the flames, including him who stands at the head of the list, had recanted. Being afterwards jealously watched and detected with some of Wycliffe's books in their possession, or as having uttered some heretical sentiment, they perished without hope of mercy under the Act as 'relapsed heretics.' Among those

who recanted, Foxe gives a list of about a hundred names under the year 1428 in the diocese of Norwich only. This, rather than the catalogue of fire alone, will give the truer estimate of the alarm and anxiety which they must have endured who in those times would possess or hear the Word of God, or might express some hidden doubt on some matter of Church authority. It was a true historical instinct in the Martyrologist when he said of such lists, which might be indefinitely multiplied, that they are of great value as showing the undercurrent of opinion, which being suppressed by force and deprived of public expression, can only be known by these continual acts of persecution. Of this class of sufferers one who is compassed with human infirmities will write tenderly and pitifully. Even Dean Hook, who, with strong prejudices wrote also with considerable human sympathies, could coldly and with contemptuous pity speak of the weakness which shrank from the flames. More truly does Foxe<sup>1</sup> say that these, 'being much beaten with the cares and troubles of those days, although they were constrained to relent and abjure, partly through correction, and partly through infirmity, yet for the good will they bare unto the truth, although with their tongues they durst not express it, we have thought good that their names should not be suppressed.'

Something, perhaps, ought fairly to be added on a general survey of the register of fire itself. It flickers somewhat in intensity. From 1440 to 1494 there is a blank, probably not altogether from omissions. In that interval came the civil wars of the Roses. The frame of English society was itself in danger, and the ecclesiastical fires paled before the civil conflagration. Some-

<sup>1</sup> Foxe, A.D. 1428.

thing might be done in classifying the special indication of heresy which brought on each the fatal sentence. In many it was the simple denial of the bodily sacramental presence. In others it somewhat varied and took other forms. If we classify the sufferers themselves we can arrive at an approximate result as far as their condition in life is noted, which is not the case with many. Seven were priests, the greater number belonging to the generation which might have been Wycliffe's own disciples. One was a noble, one a lawyer, and one a lady of rank ; one was a woman of low degree, and sixteen were artificers of different grades. The North of England seems wholly untouched. The greater part of the executions took place in London during this period, sixteen being assigned to that locality. Of the remainder, three were in the diocese of Norwich, three in Kent, six in Buckinghamshire, three in Wiltshire, and eight at Coventry. Long after the Reformation the counties of Suffolk and Buckingham retained the inheritance of anti-episcopal sentiment and hatred of religious constraint. How far even now, when the memory of the old sufferings is forgotten, the echoes of those secret studies of Wycliffe's books may be lineally traced among the nonconforming peasantry in Suffolk might be a curious enquiry. But, upon the whole, our analysis of the record of ancient persecutions may carry with it some consolation. Those bishops and statesmen of old were involved in a horrible system, and partook in the crime of their age. But they were not, upon the whole, unsparing and brutal tyrants. The result shows us that few among them signed what were practically the death-warrants. There are only occasional traces of severe and inquisitorial search after delinquents on the part of some sterner spirit, often urged on, it may be, by baser

and more cruel officials, like the summoners whom Foxe delights in gibbeting in his pages. To say more would be to forget the dark blots of persecution, the shadow of which from purer times of knowledge falls back upon our pages. And when we think of what Latimer and others have done, we may remember more gently some of the great Englishmen of the fifteenth century who passed those frightful sentences and administered that execrable law ; and we may be thankful that the land, though so deeply scarred, was not stained and polluted with fire and blood as other parts of Europe have been.



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE AGE OF CIVIL WARS.

*Kings of England.*

<i>Ric. II.</i>	1377—1399.		<i>Hen. V.</i>	1413—1422.
<i>Hen. IV.</i>	1399—1413.		<i>Hen. VI.</i>	1422—1472.

WHEN Archbishop Sudbury placed the crown on the head of the young king Richard II. in 1377, none could dream of the horrible death that awaited him, but there must have been a vivid consciousness that troubles were gathering thickly around. Taxes were pressing hardly on a discontented people. The condition of the peasantry in the decay of the feudal system was full of elements of discord. The old soldiers of the French wars were unrequited and malcontent, while the French ravaged the coasts of England. The pope was urgent that Wycliffe and all his followers should be crushed. In an evil day for the archbishop he became chancellor of England, 1379. The contemporary chronicles and the records of Parliament give a vivid account of the harassed condition of the English people at this time. It was with a sad recollection of the days of victory, whose laurels were yet green, that Walsingham under the year 1376 wrote the following lament over the darling hero of the nation:<sup>1</sup>—‘At this time passed away Edward, Prince of Wales, on the 8th July, the day of the Holy Trinity. When he died all the hope

<sup>1</sup> *Hypodig. Neust., ann. 1376.*

of Englishmen died. While he lived the English dreaded the assault of no enemy, the event of no war. He attacked no nation which he did not vanquish; he besieged no town which he did not capture.' Times had changed indeed. The coasts of England were insulted. Impotent expeditions were wasting the best blood and the treasure of England in attempts to retain some parts of the French conquests. The borders were troubled and distress was prevalent at home. At such times large revenues are most needed, and are raised with most reluctance. The commons believed that the taxes pressed unfairly, and that waste and peculation prevailed. In 1378 Parliament granted a tax which Walsingham says<sup>1</sup> was new and hitherto unheard-of. This was a graduated capitation tax, imposing on all persons over fourteen years of age a certain payment in proportion to their rank and supposed means.<sup>2</sup> Thus a duke was to pay 10 marks; earls, the lord mayor of London, bishops, and mitred abbots 4 pounds. So the scale ran down the varied ranks of society, until at last all not otherwise enumerated, excepting mere mendicants, were to pay fourpence a head.

In 1380 Archbishop Sudbury, as chancellor, asked the Parliament for renewed supplies in the great peril of the kingdom. After long debates a poll tax was granted, which seems not to have possessed the discriminating pressure of the former. It is said<sup>3</sup> to have been at the rate of 'three groats a head on every person in the kingdom, male or female, above the age of fifteen.' If any were unable to pay they were to be aided by the richer inhabitants of the township, provided that no

<sup>1</sup> *Hypodig. Neust.*, ann. 1378.

<sup>2</sup> *Parliamentary Hist. of England*, ann. 1378.

<sup>3</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, ann. 1380; see also *Hypodig. Neust.*

one should be called upon to contribute more than sixty groats. No modern financier has ventured on the experiment even of a graduated income tax on the lower orders of society. This poll tax was fiercely resented and roughly as well as harshly levied. A tempest of discontent, breaking out into revolts, raged over the country. Forcing their way into London under the leadership of Wat Tyler, the insurgents held the city at their mercy. The archbishop was in the Tower, and he fell into the hands of the mob, who regarding him as a traitor to the people, thirsted for his blood. Walsingham, who lived through those dreadful scenes, describes them in a narration worthy of the French Revolution itself. The archbishop fell not only with the dignity becoming his high office, but with the spirit of a Christian. Some butcherly ruffian was selected or volunteered to be the executioner, and with eight strokes hacked off the head of the victim. After the first abortive blow the prelate exclaimed :<sup>1</sup> ‘Ah ! ah ! it is the hand of the Lord.’ ‘The shouts of the surrounding populace,’ says the historian, ‘were not such as men utter, but beyond all human utterance, like the yells of those who inhabit hell.’ The old chronicler is right. A mob left to its lower instincts, freed from the restraints of authority, and raging blindly against its victims, is rather demoniacal than human.

The further course of the revolt may be left to the pages of civil history, saving so far as the narrative may tend to illustrate the feeling of some at least of the tenantry of the great abbeys towards their ecclesiastical lords, and may, therefore, bear on the catastrophe which awaited those institutions at no distant period. The commons<sup>2</sup> of St. Alban’s having joined Wat Tyler’s

<sup>1</sup> Walsingham, *in an* 1, 1381.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

insurrection, held council at the Church of St. Mary-le-bow how they might turn the revolt to their own individual benefit. Their chief grievances seem to have been restrictions on hunting and fishing, on the rights of pasturage on certain commons, and particularly the claim of the abbey that corn should be ground in the abbey mill, thus paying a grist tax to the monastery. Meanwhile the news arrived at the abbey that the archbishop had been brutally murdered, and that Tyler's insurgents were threatening to support the men of St. Alban's in the perpetration of similar atrocities. After various acts of violence the mob arrived at the gates of the abbey, which the monks did not venture to close. Their first measure was to open the abbot's prison and to free all the prisoners except one, whom for some cause they deemed worthy of death. Him they beheaded. Whatever may have been the threats, and however alarming the aspect of affairs, it does not seem that much actual violence was committed, or that the buildings of the abbey were materially injured. The insurgents, however, forced their way into the presence of the abbot, and having obtained the surrender of all deeds and charters which were restraints on their liberties, burned them in the market-place. The abbot was further required to sign a charter, written at their dictation, conveying to the men of St. Alban's the fullest assurance of their liberties. It need scarcely be added that such a document became worthless when legal security returned. But the terrible uncertainties and painful humiliation of those days, when the great abbey lay at the mercy of the mob, could never have been erased from the memory of the monks. It added gall to the ink with which Walsingham wrote the details of the events of which this brief recital is given. The



ringleaders in the St. Alban's riots met with the usual fate of such persons; and about the same time a priest named John Ball was executed, who was charged<sup>1</sup> with preaching doctrines subversive of all society, taking as his text the distich—

When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then a gentleman?

If the contemporary charges are correct, John Ball was one of those who brought upon Wycliffe's doctrines that reproach of being perilous to society, which enlisted the State in the cause of the Church to resist what seemed a common danger.

An insurrection of a similar character which broke out in Norfolk in 1381 has special interest. It brings before us the mediæval militant bishop. Spencer, bishop of Norwich, had received his see by papal provision in reward for military service under the banner of the pope. His martial spirit was rekindled by the tidings of the insurgent peasants.<sup>2</sup> He took down once more his 'two-handed sword' and his 'arrow-proof breastplate,' and at the head of the gentry of Norfolk broke the lines of the peasants. He followed up his victory with merciless military executions. Thus tranquillity was restored to the eastern counties.

But the account given by the contemporary monk of St. Alban's of the martial bishop's campaign against the insurgents is too characteristic to be so curtly abridged. 'The rustics were found entrenched with a ditch and palisade of doors, windows, tables, and stakes. In the rear were their baggage and wains, as though flight was their last thought. The martial prelate, ex-

<sup>1</sup> Walsingham, *in ann.* 1381.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

cited by the audacity of the knaves, commanded his trumpeters to sound the charge. Lance in hand he spurred on his steed with such impetuosity that he reached the ditch and was at close quarters with the foe before their archers could well bend their bows. Then the warlike bishop, like a wild boar grinding its tusks, spared neither himself nor the foe. Where the danger was greatest there was he. Pierced, hurled to the ground, wounded, the rebels lay around him, until his followers coming up the foss was gained and the combat raged. The people were at length routed, and fled through forest ground in their rear. But the bishop, playing the part of an able general, frustrated their attempts to escape. Slaughter met them and slaughter followed them. Some, including the leader, were taken alive, and the victory was complete. As for the leader, the idol of the Norfolk men, the bishop sentenced him to be drawn, hanged, and beheaded. Then by virtue of his office having heard his confession and absolved him, he showed his clemency and piety by supporting his head from collision with the ground while he was being dragged to the gallows. Still the bishop rested not, until the whole diocese had been searched and justice done on the malefactors. Thus he secured peace to the district, and unspeakable benefits to the kingdom. Admirable virtue! Praiseworthy courage of the warlike bishop!

It may be doubted if the Norfolk men themselves were much attracted by these episcopal excellences. Rather, perhaps, the seeds of Wycliffe's doctrine might find a soil enriched by the blood of the Norfolk peasants in which they might grow the more rankly. Certainly, from whatever cause, anti-episcopal teaching has always flourished in that region. The monk of St.

Alban's<sup>1</sup> no doubt recorded the deeds of the martial prelate with the more satisfaction from his remembrance of the indignities and loss inflicted on his monastery by other bands of insurgents in the same eventful year. He might feel that the two-handed sword of Bishop Spencer was avenging his own cause.

But Bishop Spencer's martial spirit could scarcely settle down quietly to the tameness of mere episcopal duties. The two-handed sword was returned reluctantly to its resting-place. A disputed succession to the Papacy gave scope for a further display of his warlike energies. Italy and France disputed the possession of so great a prize as the Papacy.

The cardinals were divided. Urban VI. was elected at Rome in the midst of appalling tumults, 1378. Clement VII. was soon afterwards elected by the seceding cardinals and fixed his seat at Avignon. Thus for eight-and-thirty years a schism divided the Papacy. Their several national politics guided for the most part the adherence of the countries of Europe. France stood almost alone at first in support of Clement, England and Flanders were on the side of Urban for this very reason. Thus Urban VI. became pope in England by Act of Parliament,<sup>2</sup> and it was at once pious and patriotic to support him against the intrusive Frenchman.

Here was an opportunity for the warlike bishop of Norwich. The Flemings were pressed by the French. Bishop Spencer received a bull from Pope Urban giving him large powers to head an expedition in aid of the Flemings<sup>3</sup> and elevating the war into the dignity and holiness of a crusade. Thus ran the form of absolu-

<sup>1</sup> Walsingham, *in ann.* 1381.

<sup>2</sup> *Parl. History*, i. 179.

<sup>3</sup> Knighton.

tion he was commissioned to give<sup>1</sup>:—‘By apostolical authority committed to me for this purpose, I absolve thee from all thy sins confessed, and for which thou art contrite; and from all those which thou would’st confess, provided they occurred to thy memory. And together with the plenary remission of thy sins, I grant thee the assurance of the reward of just persons and eternal salvation: I give thee, moreover, all the privileges of those who undertake an expedition to the Holy Land, and the benefit of the prayers of the Universal Church.’

Such an indulgence as this, coupled with the prospect of pillage and the glory of fighting the French, attracted large numbers of men, who are described in no flattering terms by the contemporary writers. But the crusade was a failure, and the bishop returned discomfited, narrowly escaping the indignity of surrender with all his forces. The sequel was not fortunate; for the king found a pretext for seizing his temporalities, which were with difficulty restored.

Sudbury’s successor at Canterbury was Courtenay, a member of the noble Devonshire house. Omitting the political life of this archbishop, which is diversified with many incidents arising out of the stormy times in which his lot was cast, his ecclesiastical career received its tone from the fact that it fell to his lot to oppose the Wycliffe movement. Before him, when bishop of London, the reformer himself appeared. As archbishop, Courtenay condemned Wycliffe’s tenets, and vigorously suppressed in the University of Oxford all manifestation of such tendencies. He it was who obtained the statute for the imprisonment of Lollards. These things have been spoken of in their proper place.

<sup>1</sup> Walsingham, *in ann.* 1382.



One of his most illustrious contemporaries was William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, whose episcopal career was within a little synchronous with that of Courtenay. His name has been endeared to many generations of Englishmen who have tasted of his bounty. He served Edward III. as chancellor, or in other important offices, many years. But his name has come down to our days chiefly in connection with the buildings erected under his superintendence, or the institutions which he founded. Extensive alterations in Windsor and other royal castles were made under his direction, and the grand perspective of the nave of Winchester Cathedral exhibits the greatness of his architectural conceptions. But his great work was the foundation of his two colleges. The famous school at Winchester after the lapse of many generations continues to fulfil the purpose of its venerated founder. New College, Oxford, he designed to receive the more matured scholars whom Winchester school should produce. Although the closeness of the tie between the two institutions has been relaxed in modern days, none can doubt that an illustrious career yet lies before the noble college. Half a millennium has passed away and many a change has swept over English thought and customs, but learning still flourishes where the windows of New College look down into the tranquil garden which sleeps under the shadow of a fragment of the ancient rampart that once begirdled Oxford. No wonder that the Wykehamist reveres his founder's memory. He lived to attend the first Parliament of Henry IV., and died 1404. All visitors to Winchester have seen his stately tomb.

If the sterner facts of Courtenay's days may be diversified by a lighter glance at contemporary manners,

it may be allowed to note two episcopal monitions<sup>1</sup> of his time. One is a precept addressed to the abbot of St. Augustine's, Bristol, whose church was converted into a cathedral in another century and a half by Henry VIII. The archbishop says that it appeared in the course of his recent metropolitan visitation that the white-habited canons of that monastery used boots of black leather. The dirt and greasiness of that material made the dress of the monks and the vestments of the altar so foul, indecent, and filthy, that it scandalised those who beheld it, and most wastefully ruined the sacred vestments. Therefore the archbishop proceeded to order that within the walls of the monastery, instead of boots they should use shoes of black or brown cloth not exceeding in value twenty pence a yard. But lest this should tend to luxury, they were not to wear such soft shoes, but boots only unless by license of the abbot, when they were going outside the monastery.

A letter from the bishop of London dated 1385,<sup>2</sup> deals with certain faults of the laity. He begins with the narrative of our Lord's severity in driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple. He then proceeds to write what may be condensed to the following purport:—‘We have learned from loud and constant report that in our cathedral, both men and women stand day by day, and chiefly on festivals, vending their goods and merchandise as if it were a market-place. Not content with this, like degenerate children, with no reverence for their mother, they leave fœtid and horrible offal at the very doors of our church, to the annoyance both in sight and smell of those who frequent the church for devotion. Others there are, idlers, and wanton, filled with malignity, who shoot or

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 103, 104.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., iii. 194.

hurl arrows, darts, and stones at the crows, pigeons, and other birds building their nests or perching in the walls or niches of the church. Others play at ball within and without the church. Thus are damaged and broken the glass windows, and the exquisitely wrought stone images which adorn the whole fabric. To prevent such great evils we admonish all persons to cease from such desecration within ten days from this date, on pain of excommunication with ringing of bells, and lighted candles and cross upheld.' Several things may strike the thoughtful reader. He may doubt whether much that has been said about Protestant irreverence for sacred objects has been truly said. He may doubt whether superstition can guard even the outward decencies of the sanctuary as well as an enlightened perception of the true spiritual use of the house of prayer. He may question whether the havoc wrought by the men of the time of the Reformation amongst the works of sacred art was anything new, and not rather the outbreak of a spirit of malicious destructiveness which had been nursed, although repressed, by ages of superstitious ignorance. He may ask whether the people at large cared for those glorious buildings, the remnant of which our own age so fondly cherishes. Doubtless such care may be traced in some conspicuous examples of Reformation times. But as a general sentiment it seems to have been wanting. There has been a fond idea, looking at the rich play of fancy that gleams forth over the luxuriant sculpture, that a hand and eye of love wrought such fabrics. It tends strongly to cool that notion when we find the press-gang at work to enlist the workmen; and when we read the warrant issued to enable a bishop thus to complete his buildings. Superstition lies very close to



brutality. It might tremble at provoking the wrath of St. Erkenwald, while it recked nothing of the destruction of the purple and crimson glass through which the light gleamed upon his grave.

Another thought may well arise. The modern Englishman would instinctively turn to the idea that a dozen stout policemen patrolling the nave would have cleared the area of the church and kept it clear ; and that, however inefficient the arrangements of that day might have been, yet a few men posted by the lord mayor with their long halberds would have been worth all the denunciation of the bishop. But so thinking he would entirely mistake the notions of that age. The most meek-spirited bishop would have spurned with indignation the idea of the secular power intruding within the sacred area. The ecclesiastics maintained their exemptions and immunities, and accepted the concomitant disadvantages. Becket fell in asserting the privileges of Holy Church, but the law could not touch his murderers. At that time the sole weapon of the Church was excommunication. So it was in this simple matter of police. If bell, cross, and candle could not keep the church from defilement, the magistrate should not do it. So the clergy went on their way till their power collapsed. It is no ungrateful thought that since the first excesses of Reformation troubles, a purer because more enlightened reverence in the public mind, aided by the sympathising hand of the civil power, has kept our sacred edifices more effectually than the utmost power of superstition ever availed to do.

Courtenay was succeeded in the see of Canterbury by another representative of a noble house. The lordship and castle of the Arundels have passed by female inheritance into the line of the Howards, Dukes of



Norfolk. In the reign of Edward III. one of the greatest of the Earls of Arundel married a Plantagenet, and the third son of that marriage, Thomas Arundel, became archbishop of Canterbury 1397-1414. Involved together with his brother, the Earl of Arundel, in the political troubles of the stormy times of Richard II., he was driven into exile and the earl was beheaded, 1397. He had not long to wait before Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, John of Gaunt's son and heir, followed him into banishment. The archbishop saw in this prince the means of effecting his own restoration, and exacting vengeance on the king, whom he regarded as the murderer of his brother. It was in no small degree at the instigation of the archbishop that Henry, after the death of his father, the Duke of Lancaster, ventured on his hazardous expedition. The duke and the archbishop landed with a small retinue in Yorkshire, and in a few weeks Henry was on the throne, and Richard in the prison where he was not allowed to linger long. The archbishop, after leading the new king to the throne to which Parliament called him, addressed the assembly<sup>1</sup> from 1 Sam. ix. 17, 'A man shall reign over my people.' The drift of the discourse was to show them that in the Lancastrian prince they had now a *man* instead of a *child* as their king. They were delivered from the petulance and unreason of a child, and 'so in the stead of a child wantoning in foolish stubborn humours, a man shall reign, and such a man that it shall be said of him, "A king shall reign in wisdom, and he shall execute judgment and do justice on the earth."' "

It thus becomes clear that the manner in which Henry IV. obtained the crown identified him with the

<sup>1</sup> Collier, vi. 607; *Parl. History*, i. col. 268.

cause of the clergy. The circumstances of his reign, the difficulties he encountered from his parliaments, while the clergy in Convocation readily voted him subsidies, the aid which in other ways he received from the archbishop, all tended in the same direction. It is not, therefore, surprising that the formidable statute against heresy—the Act ‘*de Heretico Comburendo*’—should have been passed early in this reign. The severities which the followers of Wycliffe endured for more than a century under this Act have already been noticed.<sup>1</sup> The degree in which the opinions of Wycliffe with regard to clerical wealth had penetrated the minds of the people—or, it might be more correct to say, the degree in which he faithfully represented a long-growing sentiment—may be inferred from the proceedings of what has been known as the *Parliamentum indoctum*, the unlearned Parliament, from which the sheriffs were ordered to exclude lawyers. It met at Coventry, 1404. It was represented to the House that the recent civil war, in which Hotspur had fallen near Shrewsbury, the Welsh troubles caused by Owen Glendower, the Scotch disquietudes, and other causes of anxiety, had crippled the treasury, and that supplies were urgently needed.

The scene which ensued in Parliament ought to be given with as little condensation as may be in the language of the monk of St. Alban’s,<sup>2</sup> who lived through those stormy times. The account must have been brought by some of those who returned from Coventry, and may have been guests at St. Alban’s. Nay, the abbot himself, with some attendants, was probably a witness of it all. There can be little doubt that the lifelike narrative substantially reproduces what Walsingham had heard at the time, and had frequently dis-

<sup>1</sup> Pages 325–332.

<sup>2</sup> *Hypodig. Neust.*, A D. 1404.

cussed with those who had been present. To the demand of the king for supplies for the public service under his manifold troubles, the Commons replied that they could find no other remedy than to confiscate the patrimony of Christ through the whole kingdom—in other words, to deprive the Church of all its temporal possessions. Then arose a great dispute between the clergy and the laity. The knights declared that they continually marched against rebels and enemies with the king and for the king. In this service they expended their fortunes and risked their persons. Meanwhile the clergy sat quietly at home, bringing the king no aid. The archbishop of Canterbury replied that the clergy contributed quite as much as the laity to the king's treasury. Nay, they paid a tenth more often than the laity paid a fifteenth. Moreover their armed tenants followed the king to war in as large numbers as those of the laity. And beside all this, night and day they offered masses and prayers for him and for all who were with him.

To this the Speaker intimated with voice and gesture that he set but little value on the prayers of the Church. 'Now,' exclaimed my lord of Canterbury, 'I see plainly which way the hap of the realm is going, the prayers by which the Divine Being is propitiated being lightly esteemed. Never did a kingdom long endure where prayer and devotion failed. But as for thee who despisest the religion of the clergy, think not thou wilt plunder with impunity the property of the Church. As long as the archbishop of Canterbury lives at thy peril shalt thou touch anything that is his.'

Then, rising, the archbishop bent his knee before the king, and appealed to the oath which he had taken to preserve the honour and rights of the Church and its



ministers. The king desired him to return to his seat, and assured him that it was his wish to leave the Church in as good or better condition than that in which he had found it.

Then the archbishop thus addressed the knights: 'You, and those like you, persuaded our lord the king and his predecessors to confiscate the property of the cells of French and Norman monasteries which they possessed in England. You told them that they would thus accumulate great wealth, yet it is manifest this day that the king is not half a mark the richer. You extort or beg from him, and appropriate to yourselves all that property. It is easy to see that you are seeking your own profit, not the king's welfare. If the king were to adopt your execrable proposition, which God forbid, he would not be one farthing the richer next year. I will offer this head of mine to the sword before the Church shall be deprived of her least right.' The knights, struck by this speech, and the firmness of the archbishop, held their peace. But perceiving that the knights would persist, he drew over to his side some of the temporal peers, and the proposal was dropped.

It would have been interesting to compare with this the account which Sir John Cheney gave of the same incident when he went back to his own county. But for some years to come, it is the clerical version which alone reaches us. It is, however, manifest that the clergy believed, and probably on good grounds, that the estates of the Church were in great danger.

The reality of that peril seems to be distinctly acknowledged in the bull of Eugenius IV. to Henry VI., sanctioning the foundation of Eton College, 1440. After speaking of the marvellous providence of God in the



defence of the Church, the pope proceeds thus<sup>1</sup>:—‘ Which we have seen most distinctly proved in our times in the case of the Anglican Church. In the last generation the sons of Belial conspired against it with wicked factions. They would have destroyed it by their laboured endeavours, had not royal virtue by the inspiration of divine grace cautiously repressed them.’

Archbishop Arundel had already encountered rough language of this kind. With some other prelates, he was with Henry IV. on his return from appeasing the discontents consequent on Hotspur’s expedition and defeat. The troops were unpaid and dissatisfied. Some of the knights suggested<sup>2</sup> that ‘ the horses and treasure of the bishops should be taken to supply the need of the soldiers, while the bishops might go home on foot. My lord of Canterbury was happily present, and is said to have answered sharply, for them all, that the knavish knights should not rob one of them without paying for their rashness with hard blows, and purchasing their spoils with stripes.’

A similar attack on Church property was made in 1410. This is attributed by some to Lord Cobham, but as before, the account given by Walsingham may suffice. He represents it as the act, not of individuals, but of the House of Commons.<sup>3</sup> ‘ To our most excellent lord the king, and to all the nobles assembled in Parliament, all the faithful Commons humbly and truly state as follows : It is in the power of our lord the king, from the temporal property now held and proudly wasted in the realm by bishops, abbots, and priors, to have fifteen earls, fifteen hundred knights, six thousand two hundred esquires, and a hundred hospitals, all well and

<sup>1</sup> Bekynton’s *Letters*, Rolls series, ii. 275.

<sup>2</sup> *Hypodig. Neust.*, ann. 1403.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1410.

faithfully sustained by the lands and tenements now uselessly wasted.' But when they endeavoured to show whence such large sums could be raised they failed to do so. The king, hating the malice of the Lollards, forbade them to presume again to utter such lies. The execrable crew of Lollard knights then sought that convicted clerks should be committed, not to the bishops' custody, but to secular prisons. Further, they asked that the statute for the imprisonment of Lollards without royal warrant might be changed or modified. They were told that if any change were made it should be in the direction of increased severity.

It is impossible, within a limited space, to discuss fully the question of the hold which Wycliffe's doctrines had obtained upon the English mind. It is clear that the fear and wrath of the clergy were violently excited. But through the obscurity of the clerical narrations to which we are obliged to trust, it may be seen in what direction men's thoughts were running. The Act '*de Heretico Comburendo*,' coupled with the action of Parliament, tends to show that the English nation still shrank from doctrinal innovation, but that they were shocked by the excessive wealth and ostentation of the higher clergy. They perceived that the utter worldliness of a very large number of the leading ecclesiastics could not be consistent with any notion of Gospel requirements. The times did not yet allow these ideas to bear fruit, but they lay and germinated in the minds of our forefathers; and, apart from a knowledge of them, the revolution accomplished by Henry VIII. cannot be understood.

One act of confiscation was, however, partially effected in this reign, and completed in the next, an earnest of what was coming in the next century. The

alien priories have already been named<sup>1</sup> as objects of continual dislike and suspicion. Belonging, as they did, to foreign monasteries, many of them French since Normandy had been lost to England, they were regarded as drains through which English money flowed to enrich enemies. During war they had been from time to time placed under sequestration, and remittances on account of rents to foreign owners strictly forbidden.<sup>2</sup> The remnant of them, 114 in number, was granted to the Crown in 1414. The fate of the property which thus fell in was much like that of the rest which followed it in the reign of Henry VIII. Some was sold, some granted in reward for services, some transferred to English foundations. The best known of the last of these is, perhaps, that which gave name to Sion House, the stately mansion of the Dukes of Northumberland, so familiar an object to all voyagers on the Thames.<sup>3</sup> It is said (though some antiquarians question the fact) that it was on the site of an alien priory that Henry V. founded his monastery, which, being of the order of St. Bridget, contained both monks and nuns, under the rule of an abbess.<sup>4</sup> It was one of the first of the larger monasteries to fall under the stern hands of Henry VIII. Whether Sion had been an alien priory or not, Hayling Island, near Portsmouth, certainly had been attached to the great Norman abbey of Jumieges, and was at this time granted to Sion.

The severity with which Archbishop Arundel suppressed the outward manifestations of the Lollard movement, and the support which he received from the Crown, will readily be understood when this aspect of

<sup>1</sup> Page 147.

<sup>2</sup> *Parl. History*, A.D. 1347, 1401, 1413, 1414.      <sup>3</sup> *Lyson's Middlesex*.

<sup>4</sup> *Hypodig. Neust.*, ann. 1414, describes the rules of this order.



the agitation is considered. The formidable risings of the commons in the preceding reign under Wat Tyler and others, coupled with the unsettled condition of things in Church and State, produced a strong conservative reaction, in which the Church and the Crown became banded together for mutual defence. Yet even now signs were not wanting that old privileges were giving way. Scrope, archbishop of York, was involved in the northern rebellion, and, being arrested, was tried before a royal judge for high treason, and beheaded the same day, the first English bishop whose sacred office was no protection to his life under sentence of the law.

Arundel's lot fell upon stormy days. The glare of the first Smithfield fires balefully glitters on his mitre. The cause, the proceedings, the sentence are alike hateful to Englishmen now. William Sawtrey and John Badby, whose ashes mingle with that strange congeries which lies under the pavement of Smithfield, and who were sent to their fiery death by this archbishop, command a sympathy which is wholly denied their judge. His tomb at Canterbury has long been wrecked, and his remains are no more distinguishable than those of his victims. But this much may be said of him. He was no mere inquisitor. He was one of a high race who had held their own by the strong hand. With the weapons of the age, such as they were, he stood forth and smote fiercely for what he deemed the rights of his princely station and the rights of the Church over which he presided.

In connection with the reign of Henry IV. may be noticed the Acts regulating vicarages, which will involve an explanation of several matters relating to the classification of benefices and ecclesiastical endowments, familiar, yet not popularly understood. During some



centuries the patronage of a large number of the benefices<sup>1</sup> throughout England had been granted by the former patrons to the cathedral and other chapters, and to the monasteries. These religious corporations had taken great liberties with the parochial endowments, and, conveying to their own use the produce of the glebes and tithes, had caused the churches to be served by one of their body, or had placed stipendiary curates in charge. Yet this mode of stating the case, while generally true, is not altogether accurate. The glebe lands may have belonged to the parochial priest in full possession. But it was not an essential part of the idea of tithe that it was an endowment for the parish church. The legislation of Saxon times shows that though it was held that each proprietor should pay his tenth to God, it was not so certain<sup>2</sup> who should be the recipient. An ordinance of Charlemagne directs that it should be distributed by order of the bishop; and something of this kind may be traced in Saxon laws. It was, perhaps, a natural rather than a legal consequence that the parish priest should in most cases become the ordinary receiver of the parish tithe. But the necessary obligation of this was not recognised, and this looseness paved the way for the appropriation not only of tithe but of land also to monasteries and other favoured ecclesiastical corporations. It was certainly a cheap way of earning credit as a great founder, whether of monasteries, or, in later times, of colleges, thus to make over to them, with purchased papal connivance, the parochial heritage.

It is said<sup>3</sup> that by the middle of the thirteenth century more than one-third of the benefices of England had been subjected to this abuse. The bishops from

<sup>1</sup> Burn, *Ecc. Law*; art. *Appropriation*.      <sup>2</sup> Stubbs, *Const. Hist.*, i. 228.

<sup>3</sup> Burn, *Ecc. Law*, art. *Appropriation*.

time to time checked these evils, and secured by regulations a better provision for the parochial cures. Finally, they compelled the monasteries to present to these churches, under the title of *vicar*, or substitute for the original minister of the parish, a priest who should be in full possession of the benefice under the usual ecclesiastical laws, and to whom out of the parochial tithes and lands a sufficient endowment should be assigned, the residue going to the funds of the ecclesiastical or monastic body which held the patronage. In the reign of Richard II. these arrangements were made the subject of a statute, and it was decreed that in all such cases the bishop should set apart 'a convenient sum' out of the proceeds for the poor of the parish, and that the vicar should be 'well and sufficiently endowed.' In the reign of Henry IV.<sup>1</sup> it was ordered as a further precaution against abuse that no monastic priest should be instituted to any such vicarage, but that a secular priest should be presented and properly 'endowed at the discretion of the ordinary to perform divine service and keep hospitality.'

Without entering into intricate details, this may suffice in explanation of the distinction of English benefices into rectories and vicarages. The rectories are those which have not been subjected to this process of absorption and re-endowment; the vicarages those which have undergone the change many centuries ago, or else by recent parliamentary enactment have been included under the same designation. In some churches which were under special relation to a monastery, the obligation to appoint a vicar did not hold. In such cases a curate, irremovable by the patron, and hence known as

<sup>1</sup> Hen. IV., 3rd Parliament, 1402.

a Perpetual Curate, was appointed; and this is still a well-known designation in the Church of England.

When the title of *rector* was first given to the priest who held the undiminished benefice, with its lands, tithes, and full privileges, does not appear. He was and is known in law as the 'parson of the parish.' In Roman law<sup>1</sup> a *person* (*persona*) signifies any individual or corporate body capable of legal rights. Slaves were not *persons*; they had no rights; whereas an ecclesiastical corporation was a *person*, and could be represented and have its rights pleaded in a court of law. Hence the parish priest, representing the full rights of a parish whose endowments and duties had not been tampered with, was *persona parochi*, the parson of the parish, in the eye of the Civil Law, which the Canon Law followed. Mere stipendiary ministers, it is evident, were not *persons* in *this* sense, though, like other men, they would be *persons* in relation to other rights which they might possess of other kinds. Finally, when vicars became legally established, they also might seem to have become 'parsons of the parish' in respect of the rights and endowments by law reserved to them. Yet it was not strictly so. To this day the canons of 1603 continually enumerate parsons and vicars as two distinct classes,<sup>2</sup> although performing identical public duties. So far removed was 'parson' in its earlier and legal use from the modern distortion of the term, in which it has become the least dignified appellation for any ecclesiastic.

It will be seen from this recital that the alienation from Church purposes of so large a portion of the tithes and glebe lands was not the work of Henry VIII. The laxity of patrons and the absorptive powers of monastic bodies, aided by papal bulls, had transferred them ages

<sup>1</sup> The Institutes of Justinian by Sandars.

<sup>2</sup> Canon 113, &c.



before from the Church to various corporations of a more or less religious character, and the endowments thus alienated followed the fate of those corporations when the Reformation came. Lands and tithes thus transferred from parochial use were said to be appropriated or impropriated, between which terms a distinction has been drawn by legal writers.<sup>1</sup> But it is confessed that the two are used as synonymous in various statutes. The derivation is obvious, the parish property being diverted by the impropiator (*in proprios usus*) into his own use.

Henry IV. passed away (as all readers of Shakspeare know) in the Jerusalem Chamber of the Abbot's house at Westminster, but his remains lie at Canterbury, near to those of his uncle, the Black Prince.

The accession of Henry V. to the throne of England and of Chicheley to the see of Canterbury belong to the same year. If the one was the conquering sword of England, the other was the great statesman who organised victory.

Chicheley's intellect was of that practical order which we like to represent as characterising the English statesman. In our own age, as in that, the mercantile classes and the landed gentry and nobility have produced in varying proportions men of this cast of mind, though coloured by the mental associations of their own order. In Chicheley's time there was as yet no career for the trained intellect of the University, no position presenting openings for fame and emolument outside the Church. Like other rising men from the mercantile ranks,<sup>2</sup> he took orders, and, in return for distinguished legal and diplomatic services in the reigns of Richard II. and the

<sup>1</sup> Burn, *Ecc. Law*, art. *Appropriation*; Cripps, *Law of the Church*.

<sup>2</sup> Spencer, *Life of Chicheley*, 3.



two first kings of the House of Lancaster, was rewarded by preferments so numerous that they almost baffle enquiry, and at last in 1414 became archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>1</sup> His primacy is chiefly notable in its ecclesiastical relations from its comprising the period within which the Councils of Constance and Basle were held. The schism in the Papacy—the existence of rival popes excommunicating each other—might perhaps have been expected to induce greater carefulness in the outward decencies of the pontifical life. Were it only a desire to present to the world higher claims to spiritual authority, some check upon the more flagrant abuses which harassed clergy and laity might have been looked for.

The result on the contrary seemed to be a yet deeper demoralisation of that venal court. The conscience of Europe was deeply wounded, and the result was the assembly of the Councils which have been named, whose great object was the reform of the Papacy, and its establishment on a purer footing. Never was a disappointment greater. The schism was healed, and the pope appointed at Constance once more ruled in Rome without a rival. The Council had presumed to judge even a pope and to declare itself the pope's superior. The pope had been compelled to accept the decision; but he and all his successors have repudiated it, and the Roman Councils have been since permitted no higher position than that of advisers to the pope. The statesmen and divines of Europe who took part in these transactions knew not that the Papacy was in itself incapable of reformation. It was based on a historic falsehood; its legislation rested on a foundation of forged and falsified documents; it was

<sup>1</sup> Spencer, *Life of Chicheley*, 7-13.

at that time engaged in withdrawing the Scriptures from an aroused and enquiring people; but the knowledge of these things was no part of the received learning or policy. So the Councils in fact only freed the Papacy from its recent difficulties; and the popes of the remaining part of the fifteenth century recklessly continued in the course which more and more alienated devout and honest minds, and prepared the way for the religious revolution of the next age.

Chicheley was present at the Council of Pisa, but at Constance and Basle he was not a member of the English delegation, a circumstance which led to some subsequent difficulties. Beaufort, bishop of Winchester, a Plantagenet by birth, belonged to that line from which by direct lineage (though not without irregularity) the modern noble house of the Somersets, Dukes of Beaufort, has descended. The bishop of Winchester being at Constance, threw himself on the papal side. Many of the best minds of Europe had desired that the constitution of the Papacy should be recast at that council before the new pope should be appointed. The papal party demanded that the appointment of a pope to preside over them should precede any other measure. This fatal policy was adopted, and Beaufort's influence being given to that side placed him in opposition to Chicheley. But it secured him the rank of cardinal, and the promise of the post of legate *a latere* in England. When the spirit of English independence was at the lowest ebb such presumption as this would have roused opposition. But that a generation which had passed, and intended to maintain, the statute of *præmunire* should tamely submit to such usurpation was impossible. The archbishop wrote<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Spencer, *Life of Chicheley*, App. iii.

urgently to Henry V. on the subject. He explained to the king what the powers of a legate *a latere* were, how great and exorbitant; and 'beside these,' he said, 'what he may have, in special of the pope's grace, no man knoweth, for it standeth in his will to dispose as to him seemeth good.' He further stated that in English history the admission of a legate *a latere* had been only occasional and for some special business, but that a resident legate *a latere* was wholly unprecedented. He finally entreated the king to take measures to prevent such an intrusion on the rights of the Church of England. Thus Beaufort was compelled to bide his time. That time came in the weak days of the minority of Henry VI. But even then it required consummate dexterity and much party intrigue to vindicate his position.

It would be unjust to say that political reasons only bound Henry V. to the cause of the Church. Whatever may be the truth with regard to the excesses of his early days, which Shakspeare has identified with characters never to be effaced from the English mind, undoubtedly, as a king, Henry was devout and earnest beyond the mark of most lay devotion in those times. The followers of Wycliffe and the subversive anarchists of the age were involved in the same condemnation. The confusion of the two was not altogether unnatural, for even now what were the real principles and the exact political aims of Lord Cobham, the great Lollard leader, is a historical problem to which different answers are given. The royal proclamations and the statutes passed against the Lollards certainly charge them not merely with heresy but with treasonable conspiracy. It is difficult to believe that there can have been no ground for such



accusations. As it was in the great German reformation, so it seems to have been in this earlier English movement. Agrarian discontent, the natural revolt of the unprivileged classes against the privileged, the anarchical spirit of revolution which in no age is quite extinct, the ambition of demagogues, all combined to avail themselves of the breaking up of the old foundations on which religious belief had rested. It was enough to alarm the least cautious statesman. In the days of the Reformation it swayed over to the Roman side some of the most powerful European states. In the days of Lollardism it tended in no small degree to postpone a reform of religion for another century.

But besides this Henry V. was a really devout man after the Roman model. Death took him at a happy moment for his fame. His great victories, united to a just political discernment, left France at his feet, and placed its crown on the head of his infant son. But he had purposed the splendid folly of a renewed crusade, which must have squandered the treasures of his kingdoms, risked his conquests, and destroyed his armies. Beside his death-bed the fifty-first Psalm was chanted ;<sup>1</sup> he paused at the words ‘Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.’ ‘As surely as I expect to die,’ he said, ‘I intended, after I had established peace in France, to go and conquer Jerusalem, if it had been the good pleasure of my Creator to have let me live my due time.’ No king of England has been more lamented, or has had so sumptuous a funeral. His body was ‘laid’<sup>2</sup> in a chariot royal richly apparelled with cloth of gold ; upon the coffin was laid a representation of his person adorned with robes, diadem, sceptre, and ball, like a king. The which chariot was drawn with six horses richly trapped

<sup>1</sup> Stanley, *Memorials of Westminster*, 146.

<sup>2</sup> Hall's *Chron.*



with the arms of France, Normandy, and England. On this chariot gave attendance James, king of Scots, the principal mourner,' and the feudal magnates of the realm. 'Five hundred men at arms, all in black harness, and their horses barded black, with the butt of their spears upward,' formed the escort. 'With this funeral pomp he was conveyed from Paris to Rouen, to Abbeville, to Calais, and so through London to Westminster, where he was buried with such solemn ceremonies, such mourning of lords, such prayer of priests, such lamenting of commons, as never was before that day seen in England. Neither fire, nor rust, nor fretting time shall amongst Englishmen either appal his honour or obliterate his glory.'

Nothing has touched men more in great military funerals (as in that of the Duke of Wellington) than the riderless charger following his master's body. Three<sup>1</sup> chargers of Henry were led up to the altar in Westminster Abbey, following the remains of him whom they had borne to victory. He was laid in a glorious tomb in the chief place in the Chapel of the Kings. There the bruised helmet of Agincourt still crowns the monument. His effigy is of heart of English oak. It was plated with silver gilt, and the head was of solid silver—too tempting a prize for mean cupidity. Some dastardly thief has mutilated the hero's monument.

The ecclesiastical historian may traverse the stormy reign of Henry VI., which followed, with rapid step. Civil anxieties absorbed men's attention, and the Papacy restored by the abortive Council of Constance gained, meanwhile, a firmer hold on the ecclesiastical arrangements of England. Archbishop Chicheley succumbed in the contest which had already commenced in the

<sup>1</sup> Stanley, *Memorials of Westminster Abbey*, 147.

time of Henry V. between the primacy of England and the intrusion of a resident papal legate. Henry Beaufort, bishop of Winchester, had submitted to the victor of Agincourt. In the factions of the court of Henry VI. he found his opportunity, and at length obtained a release from whatever penalties he might have incurred under the statutes of the realm for assuming this dignity. Cardinal Beaufort bore a considerable part in the factions which played with the weakness of Henry VI. The rivalry between him and the duke of Gloucester is the key to the history of the first half of that reign. The national sentiment which mourned for Humphry, the 'good duke of Gloucester,' and regarded the cardinal as the representative of the detested clerical and papal faction, has been seized by the genius of Shakspeare. The murder of the duke, followed by the conscience-stricken death of the cardinal who 'died and made no sign,' is one of the most vivid scenes in the drama of Henry VI. The poet, indeed, has drawn largely on his imagination. The chronicler Hall, who was Shakspeare's chief authority, omits the darker feature of the conscience of a murderer; but he gives this portraiture of the man, in which may be recognised the rough sketch from which Shakspeare drew:—'More noble in blood than notable in learning, haughty in stomach and high in countenance; rich above measure of all men, and to few liberal; disdainful to his kin, and dreadful to his lovers; preferring money before friendship, many things beginning and nothing performing.' Doctor John Baker, his chaplain, wrote that he being on his death-bed, said these words:—'Why should I die having so much riches? If the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it. Fie, will not death be hired? When my nephew of Glou-

cester deceased, then I thought myself able to be equal with kings, and so thought to increase my treasure in hope to have worn a triple crown. But I see now the world faileth me, and so I am deceived: praying you all to pray for me.' Whether or not it may be possible now to readjust the scale, or how far the popular opinion of the good Duke Humphry and the dark covetous cardinal be true, must be left to those who investigate more deeply the records of those times. Cardinal Beaufort was distinguished, like many other occupants of his famous see, by some sumptuous buildings. He lies in his chantry chapel in Winchester Cathedral, under a canopy so exquisitely wrought, that it is painful to think that no hand of love—nothing but the power of his hoarded wealth—reared a memorial so delicate and yet so grand.

The great memorial of Archbishop Chicheley is not so much his carved effigy at Canterbury as the magnificent college of All Souls, which he founded in Oxford, and endowed partly out of the lands which had belonged to the forfeited alien priories.

Shakspeare,<sup>1</sup> following Hall's 'Chronicle,' makes Chicheley the moving spring of the French wars of Henry V. His policy is represented as a deliberate scheme for diverting the minds of the king and of the nation from the attacks on Church property which had become so formidable. With this view the archbishop is represented as having thus spoken :—

For I have made an offer to his majesty,—  
Upon our spiritual convocation ;  
And in regard of causes now in hand,  
Which I have opened to his grace at large,  
As touching France,—to give yet greater sum  
Than ever at one time the Clergy yet  
Did to his predecessors part withal.

<sup>1</sup> King Henry V., Act I.



Whatever account may be given of this view of the archbishop's policy upon a more deliberate survey of the state of the nation, it is at least unquestionable that the king was largely indebted to the zealous support of the archbishop and the subsidies of the clergy in his great enterprise. Nor, perhaps, could anything have more effectually withdrawn the attention of the English from the civil and ecclesiastical distractions of recent years than such a stimulus to their martial spirit and such an appeal to their national pride as were given by the marvellous successes of the hero of Agincourt. Accordingly, king and Church were at one in the suppression of Lollardism. Still the resistance to Roman aggression had not declined; and when in after days Chicheley succumbed to the fierce attack of Pope Martin V., who demanded the repeal of the statute of *præmunire* as an audacious encroachment on the see of St. Peter, Parliament replied to the papal missive as firmly as ever. 'Did you consider,' said the pope<sup>1</sup> to the archbishop, 'what a strict account you must give to Almighty God for the flock committed to your care, and how much you are bound to support the rights and honour of the Roman Church, of which you hold your jurisdiction and dignity? Is this your manner of showing love to Christ? Is this feeding and taking care of the flock? Will such conduct as this discharge your obligations to the Holy See? You can see the authority of our blessed Saviour and the Apostolic See despised and trampled on without so much as dropping one word of remonstrance. What abominable violence has been let loose upon your province, I leave it to yourself to consider. Pray peruse that royal law (if there is anything that is either royal or law about it): for how can that

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 482.



be called a statute which repeals the laws of God and the Church? Under colour of this execrable statute, the king of England reaches into the spiritual jurisdiction, and governs as if the Saviour had constituted him his vicar. He makes laws for the Church and the order of the clergy as if the superintendency of these things had been committed to his highness and not to St. Peter. Besides this hideous encroachment, he has enacted several terrible penalties against the clergy. People of all persuasions and countries have the liberty of coming into England: and only those who have cures bestowed upon them by the supreme bishop, by the vicar of Christ Jesus—only those, I say, are banished, seized, imprisoned, and stripped of their fortunes. Was ever such iniquity as this passed into a law? Christ built his Church upon St. Peter: but this Act of Parliament will not allow St. Peter's see to make provisions suitable to the necessities of the Church. This statute ventures to overrule the Divine pleasure, for if the immediate representative of the Saviour thinks fit to delegate any priest to execute the power of the keys, this Act not only refuses to admit them, but forces them out of the kingdom.

‘What does your prudence think of this? Is this a Catholic statute? Why did you not lift up your voice like a trumpet?—you, who have the honour of being the successor of that glorious martyr St. Thomas, who, to remove the oppression of statutes like this, sacrificed himself for the interest of the Church?’

‘Let this reproach put you on reforming your conduct. Exert your influence among the laity; inform their understandings; bring them over to justice; show them how much guilt this statute lays upon their consciences.’

Such, considerably abridged, was the reprimand Chicheley received from the pope. Under penalty of excommunication he was charged to proceed in this matter. It will, at least, be sufficiently evident how closely the statute of *præmunire* struck home to the centre of what Rome held dear, and presumed to call the cause and will of Christ. Chicheley in vain struggled against the injunction. Another letter, of the same date as the above, addressed to the two archbishops, significantly naming<sup>1</sup> York before Canterbury, annulled by pontifical authority all statutes running counter to the papal claim of provisions, and declared all who should act upon them or yield to them excommunicate. The archbishops submitted, and Chicheley underwent the supreme humiliation of addressing Parliament<sup>2</sup> in 1428 from the text, ‘Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s,’ on the illegality and sinfulness of the restrictions on the papal authority which these statutes had imposed. The archbishop wept when he dwelt on the perils of ecclesiastical censures, and even of an interdict hanging over the kingdom. But on this point Englishmen had made up their minds. No concession was made, and the days were past when excommunications and interdicts could bring nations to their knees. The king<sup>3</sup> required the archbishop to send all bulls adverse to the laws and rights of the realm for the Council to deal with. Thus the pope’s objurgations passed as what they had now truly become, idle bluster. The echo of that bluster, however, is still heard from the Vatican.

Chicheley died in 1443, leaving his church to John Stafford, a member of a noble house, also a successful lawyer, who held high office, and in the time of Henry VI. was lord high treasurer. For the purposes of this

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 471.<sup>2</sup> Ibid., iii. 483.<sup>3</sup> Ibid., iii. 486.

work little more need be noted than the link which yet binds his primacy to so many homes in England. As chancellor he had already, in 1441, affixed the great seal to the charter for the noble foundation of Henry VI. at Eton, which, with the attached King's College at Cambridge, this monarch created on the model of William of Wykeham's twin work at Winchester and Oxford.

It may not be so well known that the papal grant conveying great spiritual privileges to the chapel at Eton was recognised by Archbishop Chicheley before his death. His archiepiscopal letter<sup>1</sup> breaks forth into poetical strains over 'the joy of our holy mother the Church of England singing with sweet modulations her hymn of praise at her rare felicity in having a monarch who could repair the ancient and rear new buildings to the praise of God and her own honour. Amongst these, like a star of marvellous brightness, shines forth that most famous college of St. Mary of Eton, near Windsor, founded not so much for the increase of divine worship as for imbuing youths with the elements of science and virtue.' The letter proceeds to refer to a bull of Pope Eugenius already received, granting the same indulgence to persons visiting St. Mary at Eton on the festival of the Assumption as belonged on that occasion to the church of St. Peter at Rome. Now, the archbishop exults to add, yet greater gifts had been vouchsafed by a recent bull. 'All who should devoutly visit the Eton fane on the day of Assumption from the first to the second vespers, in each year, should receive in perpetuity full remission of all their sins, a thing which we do not remember to have been ever granted by any of the Roman pontiffs to any other place.'

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 536.



The sad consequences of separation from the Roman Church, *extra quam nulla salus*, have, it may be feared, utterly annihilated these privileges. Else might we say,—‘Happy are ye, Eton boys, if ye knew but your own happiness. Sovereigns have not forgotten your royal foundation; statesmen and divines have come forth from you; the river and the sward are yours; England would scarcely know herself without you. But little have you dreamed that devout attendance at vespers in your chapel on the Assumption day might have entailed remission of all your sins!’ So presumptuous man has said: what the Judge Divine has said is another thing.

The letters still remain<sup>1</sup> which describe the anxiety with which Henry VI. waited for the papal concession. His secretary writes to the agent at Rome<sup>2</sup>:—‘Day by day the king longs to hear good news of this business. This is his daily question, When shall we have news from Master Vincent? When shall we hear from him?’ Six months later there is still the same uncertainty and the same anxiety; and then follows,<sup>3</sup> perhaps, the most effectual part of the transaction. A thousand ducats lie at the disposal of the agent at a certain bank to be expended as he may find necessary. It was a great pardon, and it cost much money.

The idea which had been suggested to Henry’s mind by his advisers in these foundations was greatly in advance of the older monastic model. The old monastic notion is one of almost pure spiritual selfishness; that of a college, on the other hand, contemplates a centre of light and usefulness. The bishops were weary of the ceaseless struggles with abbots who

<sup>1</sup> Bekynton’s *Letters*, i. 174–186, Rolls Series.

<sup>2</sup> Feb. 14, 1443.

<sup>3</sup> Oct. 23, 1443.



claimed exemption from their authority and yet maintained no order, and often but little decency, within their own walls. Yet it would be an error to think of the great educational establishments of modern days when Eton first comes into view. It is still an ecclesiastical foundation with an appendage of a small school and hospital. A provost and ten priests,<sup>1</sup> with a due number of clerks and choristers, are provided for the services of a church which its founder intended to excel in dimensions any cathedral in the kingdom. To this was added a school where twenty-five poor scholars were to learn grammar, and a hospital where twenty-five poor and infirm men were to pray for the soul of Henry, his father and mother, his progenitors and all the faithful departed. Such was the Eton contemplated in the bull of its foundation.

The primacy of John Kemp followed in 1452, on the very eve of the commencement of the war between the great factions thenceforward known as the Red and the White Roses. The verdict given upon a survey of his life by Dean Hook is this:—‘He regarded his clerical preferments simply as the means by which provision was to be made for a minister of state, and he seems to have been insensible of his responsibilities as a minister of God. The multiplicity of his neglected preferments may be adduced, as one proof out of many, of a necessity for a sweeping reform in the Church.’ As an ecclesiastical lawyer he was employed as counsel against Lord Cobham on his trial. Afterwards the variety of his duties and employments, coupled with the rapidity and multitude of his preferments, marks the man of practical ability needed in the public affairs of that age. As archbishop of York and chancellor

<sup>1</sup> Bekynton's *Letters*, Rolls Series, ii. 280; i. lxxxiii.

of England he used his influence in arranging the difficulties under which Beaufort laboured in retaining his position as bishop of Winchester together with his dignity as cardinal. On this occasion and in the course of subsequent negotiations, he espoused the side of the pope, and was himself made a cardinal in 1439, and was finally promoted to the see of Canterbury in 1452. He is said to have built the famous pulpit at Paul's Cross,<sup>1</sup> which figures so conspicuously in the history of the Reformation, and to have provided an endowment to pay a fee to the preacher who should there deliver the Sunday sermon. This endowment is, perhaps, almost the only link which binds Cardinal Kemp with our own days. The Sunday morning preacher at St. Paul's Cathedral still receives at least some portion of it after the lapse of more than four centuries. The ability with which this adroit and able statesman steered his way through the troubled politics of the perilous contests between Yorkist and Lancastrian belongs to the civil historian.

A prelate of Plantagenet descent, Thomas Bourchier, who also became cardinal, succeeded Cardinal Kemp at Canterbury. He led the Church of England through the terrible convulsions of the last struggles of the rival Roses, and just survived to unite in marriage Henry VII. with Elizabeth of York; 'whereby,' says Fuller, 'those roses, which formerly with their prickles had rent each other, were united together.'

It was during the primacy of Archbishop Bourchier that the prosecution for heresy of Reginald Pecock, bishop of Chichester, occurred, of which such discordant accounts have been given. John Foxe has discovered in him one who 'had received into his heart

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed.

some sparks of the pure and sincere religion.' He accordingly regards him as one of the sufferers for the Gospel before the Reformation. Bishop Short<sup>1</sup> speaks of him as 'a promoter of the Reformation.' On the other hand, Dean Hook represents him as an advocate of the papal power in its more extreme forms, and deems the charge of heresy little more than the convenient mode of crushing an ecclesiastic who was a political opponent. A brief examination may set forth the main questions at issue. It will be clear upon inspection of Foxe's narrative, that the larger part is mere 'padding,' and that he had very little information about the history of Bishop Pecoek beyond whatever might be gleaned from the form of recantation which he was compelled to adopt. In this document Pecoek was made to acknowledge<sup>2</sup> that he had 'otherwise held and taught than the Holy Roman and Universal Church teacheth, and especially these errors and heresies :

'I. That we are not bound to believe that Christ descended into hell after death.

'II. Nor to believe in the Holy Ghost.

'III. That it is not necessary to salvation to believe in the Holy Catholic Church.

'IV. Nor in the communion of saints.

'V. That the Universal Church may err in matters of faith.

'VI. That it is not necessary to salvation to hold and approve all that a general council ordains.

'VII. That Scripture may be understood in its literal sense, and that no other sense is necessary to salvation.'

Nothing could be more natural than that an ardent Protestant like Foxe should discern in these articles

<sup>1</sup> *Hist.*, iii. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to *Repressor*, Churchill Babington.



conclusive evidence that in Pecock he saw a brother struggling towards the light, and suffering for the truth at the hands of persecuting prelates.

Though Foxe in this, as in other instances, may have blundered, partly through want of information, partly from lack of the critical faculty, which in his time was not developed, it seems hard that he should be singled out for the epithets which are in modern times launched at his head. He is not tender, certainly, when a bishop or a bishop's official comes under his notice. But it may be fairly asked, whether he deserves the epithets 'foul-mouthed' and the like, which modern Church writers pour upon him. At any rate if he does, let the same measure be meted out to other writers of that century. Then, *proh pudor!* it will be seen that in the competition of 'Billingsgate' the contemned old martyrologist must yield the palm, and that no less personages than the refined Sir Thomas More, nay, the triple-crowned pontiffs themselves, must pass him by. This much at least it seems fair to say for the John Foxe whom the Convocation of Canterbury of 1571 had in honour. Of the general merits of his book it will be needful to speak hereafter.

The true state of the case with regard to Bishop Pecock was unknown to Foxe, and was in truth scarcely known at all until modern writers explored his own works, and elucidated the doctrines he held. His principal work, 'The Repressor of over-much Blaming of the Clergy,' has been edited and printed with an able preface in the series of Public Records, and throws light on his real sentiments.

It will be seen that on the great questions which divided the clergy in the age of the Councils of Constance and Basle he was on the Papal side. That is, he



maintained the principle, now known as ultramontane, that the pope is above general councils, and, therefore, cannot be judged or deposed by them. He defended pluralities and non-residence. He regarded bishops as deriving authority only from the pope, who was the one chief bishop to whom they owed their origin and their power. Consistently with this he was un-English enough to oppose the statutes of provisors and *præmunire*, and to support the claims of the pope to annates and other tribute. When to this it is added, that being one of the most acute and vigorous writers and thinkers of his day, he had made himself obnoxious to powerful political parties, it may be understood readily enough that there might be a combination to crush him. This could not be done by indicting him for the really offensive papal statements in his works. That would have been to attack the pope himself.

Advantage was, therefore, taken of the incaution, and often paradoxical style of this eminent man, to select certain isolated expressions on which a charge of heresy might be founded. If now the seven points of his recantation be again read, it will be seen that not one of them touches the pope or papal authority. Read in the light of Pecock's ultramontane opinions, they may simply mean that Church and Council may err, but the Pope is infallible and above them all. There is another given by Foxe, on the material presence in the Eucharist. It is very doubtful whether any such matter was urged against him. If there were it must have been unfairly pressed from some isolated expressions. He certainly held nothing resembling what would now be called Protestant doctrine on that sacrament.

Pecock had escaped when a previous attack was

made upon his writings in the time of Archbishop Stafford, but when cited before Archbishop Bourchier in 1457, he found himself in the hands of those who had determined to crush him. The archbishop, in pronouncing sentence, carefully avoided mention of the pope, but declared that ‘the doctors of the Church say with one mouth that although the sacred councils may err in matters of fact, yet they may not err in matters of faith, because Christ’s Holy Spirit is there in the midst of them, who does not suffer them to err in faith or to depart from the way of truth. Wherefore, seeing you are convicted of not only holding what is contrary to the sayings of all these doctors, but, moreover, to be a contradiction of them, it behoves us to cut you off from the body of the universal Church. Choose, therefore, for yourself one of these things, whether you will make a public abjuration, or whether you will incur the penalty of the canons, and not only suffer the reproach of degradation, but also be delivered to the secular arm, that because you have attempted to plunder the treasury of faith, you may become, according to the saying of the prophet, as well the fuel of the fire, as the food of the burning. Of these two choose one for yourself, for this is the immediate alternative in the coercion of heretics.’

It had come to this. It might have been some poor Lollard instead of a great English prelate involved in the meshes of the Statute *de Heretico Comburendo*. Sentence of heresy once pronounced, and no abjuration following, there was no remedy, execution speedily ensued, and the poor handful that might remain among the glowing embers round the stake could know nothing of the last despairing appeal which might have been sent forth. The condemned prelate replied:—

‘I am in a strait betwixt two : if I should defend my opinions I must be burned to death. If I do not defend them I shall be a bye-word and a reproach. It is better, however, for me to incur the taunts of the people, than to desert the law of faith, and to be sent after my death into hell-fire. I make it my choice, therefore, to abjure.’

Abjure he accordingly did, in circumstances of great humiliation, before a pile kindled in St. Paul’s Churchyard in which his offending books were consumed. After imprisonment in other places he was to be kept in close confinement in Thorney Abbey, where it was ordered that he should have ‘a secret closed chamber within the abbey, where he might have sight of some altar to hear mass. There was to be but one person, sad and well-disposed, to make his bed and to make him fire, as it should need.’ He might have no books but a breviary, a missal, a psalter, a legend and a bible, and no writing materials. He must have the ordinary diet of a monk, to be somewhat improved if it should seem expedient.

News in some way penetrated to Rome of the hard measure which had befallen this ill-starred papal advocate. Certain bulls issued from that court, generally so prompt in its own defence, demanding the restoration of the bishop of Chichester to his dignities. But in those times it could be remembered or forgotten, as might be convenient, that papal bulls were illegal in England. This time Archbishop Bouchier remembered that they were illegal. The bulls wrought no deliverance for Pecock, who died in prison, no man knows how or when. It is an unhappy story whatever explanation may be preferred. And what is the explanation? If he had been a powerful statesman, the history of the



next century would show us abundantly that when a minister was doomed to fall—a Wolsey, a More, or a Cromwell—a law could speedily be found which should take his dignity if not his life. But Pecock was hardly this. Dean Hook sees in the proceedings ‘a party movement to deprive the Lancastrians of a powerful writer.’ But it seems scarcely made out that Pecock had such relations with the Lancastrians as would fairly give such a complexion to his troubles.

On the contrary, there seems to have been a widely-diffused hatred to the man and to his opinions. It is said that if at his abjuration he had been compelled to go down to the fire to cast his books into it with his own hands, the London populace would have hurled him into it, books and all. The university of Oxford was bitter against its own illustrious member. The lords of the Council demanded his expulsion before they would proceed to business. Something there must have been in the man himself to raise this storm of indignation. Sarcastic, cool, self-complacent, he recked little whom he attacked or whom he made his enemy. But, judging from the master passion of the English nation, as it has been illustrated for the preceding century and a half, may it not be the true explanation of this almost national hatred, that he placed himself ostentatiously and arrogantly athwart the current of English sentiment? If a sovereign had arisen to lead them, the English would already, at several crises of their history, have cast off their allegiance to papal rule. Here was a man arguing, not in academical Latin (which few would have cared for), but in English as direct as Wycliffe’s own, for the supremacy of the pope, with its bitter fruits of varied tribute and abused patronage. Here was a man who had preached at



Paul's Cross that bishops had higher work than preaching—and more important duties than residence on their dioceses. The pope, as lord of the Church, might give the benefices to whom he would, and exact of the proceeds, as from his bailiff, as much as he would.

Eighty years were yet to pass before Latimer's 'Sermon of the Plough' was delivered, but 'the unpreaching prelate' of his vigorous satire was already detested as an anomaly of covetousness or idleness. The people of London were no Lollards, but Wycliffe had not written in vain, nor had men suffered at Smithfield in vain. It might not be accepted that the pope was Anti-Christ, but that his tax-gatherers were odious, his foreign clergy shameful intruders, and that they that 'live of the Gospel' should 'preach the Gospel,' had come to be commonplaces of English thought and speech, under the alderman's gown or at the artisan's bench. Therefore, it may be, Pecock incurred that terrible and universal hatred.

The scholarly judgment agrees in assigning to him the very highest place in his century. Dean Milman calls his 'Repressor' 'perhaps the greatest work, certainly the greatest theological work, which had yet appeared in English prose.' Hallam says of it, that 'there are passages well worthy of Hooker for weight of matter and dignity of style.' Mr. Babington says, 'it is no exaggeration to affirm that it is the earliest piece of good philosophical disquisition of which our English prose literature can boast.'

We may accept the testimony and ask what manner of book this may be? If a very brief answer may be attempted, it may be given thus. Hooker a century and a half afterwards took the several objections of the Puritan Cartwright point by point, and in order to

answer them searched into the very foundations of all law, human and divine, and into the relation and true limits of reason and revelation. Pecock, in like manner, took the several points of the Lollardism of his age, to which his work is an avowed answer, and endeavoured to build up over against them an exact logical system which might support the existing Church organisation. The general tone of the book is in many respects what may be called strongly rationalistic, exalting the office of reason and philosophy in determining the things of God in Scripture, and in the arrangements of ecclesiastical affairs. It may readily be understood how such a method, starting from the fundamental papal axiom, '*Thou art Peter*,' with all its accepted consequences, led to a depreciation of fathers, councils, and everything excepting the writer's self-confident logic, which would be most offensive to a conservative divine of any English school in those days.

If this account may be relieved by a notice of one of the lighter matters touched upon, it may be observed that after a defence of the religious orders in general, their dress, the magnificence of their buildings, which is in many respects both ingenious and interesting, he comes to one special usage of the Franciscans which pointed many a gibe against them. It might have been thought that it was nothing but the satire of a Lollard against his special mendicant foes, when Pecock gravely (though it may be fancied with covert scorn) defends the friars. 'Some of the lay people,' says he, 'blame and scorn that by the religion of St. Francis the religious persons of that religion shall not handle and touch with their hand, nor bear about them any money or coined metal—and that they must tell such money with a stick holden in their hand.'

The objector argued with some force that if the love of money was so dangerous that to handle and bear it must be utterly foregone, why should it be less perilous 'to tell the money with a stick's end, since this telling is a nigh and full homely intermeddling with it,' and likely to breed dangerous desire of it. Certainly a hard question to answer, but Pecoek pleads that there are degrees, and that if one must do it, to touch it with a stick is less familiar treatment than handling it. Besides, a man is not bound, by any law of God, to reject money, and so it does not follow that because he vows not to touch it, he must therefore vow also not to use the stick for that purpose. Because a man fasts on the Friday he is not bound to fast also on the Saturday. The Franciscan might be challenged thus: 'Friar, thou lovest money as much as other men love it, and more still, for else thou wouldest not beg so busily for it. Why wilt not thou handle it as other men do?' The friar might well answer thus: 'Sir, if I love money more than other men love it, and more than I should, yet if there were not this forbearance from touch of money, I should love money more than I love now, and therefore this forbearing from touch is not in vain.' How much of this is satire or grave earnest it is hard to say; but in his own person Pecoek takes a somewhat higher stand, and endeavours to reduce the use of the Franciscan's stick within the limits of moral principle, when he lays down the rule that frail man is often compelled to accept as his aim the lower good when the higher and more perfect good is beyond his reach. 'Each man ought to love and desire the greater before the lesser good, yet all are not bound to choose the greater instead of the less. Perfect men, indeed, must



do so, but imperfect men, cumbered with frailness and passion, ought full oft to choose the surer good to them before the unsurer good, though that surer good be less good in itself or to a perfect man than is that unsurer good.' In other words, granting that the highest good is to be above all love and use of money, yet the poor friar, being very frail and imperfect, and unable to soar so high, may be permitted at least to keep money away from him at the stick's end.

The episode of Pecoek is the one marked event that touches religious controversy in those terrible times when the nobility of England seemed bent on destroying itself in the Wars of the Roses. That the noble houses were for the most part either extinct or irretrievably ruined is one of the great results that prepared the way for the changes in the next century. When Henry VI. died, or was slain, in the Tower, the old age was passing away, new lights and new powers were rising into view, and that stage of history which more immediately prepared for the Reformation demands attention.

His canonisation was afterwards sought by Henry VII. The pope,<sup>1</sup> in his reply, 1494, acknowledged the 'sanctity of life, the pure morals, the fervent charity, the light of grace and holiness, the fastings, watchings, prayers, and works of mercy, the rich foundations of the deceased monarch.' He also spoke of the accounts which had reached him of manifest miracles at his tomb. But the pope was not prepared to go beyond enquiry. To elevate the last king of the house of Lancaster into a saint might have been an adroit means of rebuking the adherents of the White Rose, but the time had gone by for confusing imbecility with saintship.

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 640.



So Bacon<sup>1</sup> pithily says: 'The pope, knowing that king Henry VI. was reputed in the world abroad but for a simple man, was afraid it would but diminish the estimation of that kind of honour if there were not a distance kept between innocents and saints.'

<sup>1</sup> *History of Henry VII.*

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE EVE OF THE REFORMATION.

<i>Edward IV.</i>	.	1461—1483.	<i>Richard III.</i>	.	1483—1485.
		<i>Henry VII.</i>	.	1485—1509.	

HISTORY refuses to lend itself absolutely to the convenience of the writer who desires to mark off his chronicle of events and men into conveniently characteristic intervals. The more exact observers tell us that the absence of twilight, and the sudden passage from day to night within the tropics, has been far too strongly asserted. The poet may say—

The sun's rim dips ; the stars rush out ;  
At one stride comes the dark ;

but in nature the transitions are far less extreme in their rapidity. Without drawing too broad a line of demarcation, we may be content to say that the period between the death of Henry VI., 1471, and the accession of Henry VIII., 1509, may fairly be deemed that which closes the reign of mediævalism in England. The old world of feudalism in the State, of Papacy in the Church, of scholasticism in learning, was dying out, and the new world was to appear.

During this period a silent revolution was working its way through society, unknown and unsuspected in its issues. Printing, together with the spread of education, was robbing ecclesiastics of their exclusive pos-

session of the 'key of knowledge.' The discovery of America sent a wild wave of excitement through Europe. The flood of gold and silver which teemed from the new Western lands stimulated commerce beyond former example. 'New men,' the wealthy and often ennobled trader, the lawyer, the man of intellect and learning, were henceforward to come to the front in place of the old nobility who had perished in the field or on the scaffold, and in place of the ecclesiastics who had filled the judicial bench, the treasury, and the bar—who had intrigued as royal ambassadors or ruled as first ministers of the crown. Scarcely a generation of ecclesiastical state officials was to pass away after the fifteenth century had closed, before More and Cromwell were to step into the place of Cardinal Wolsey. A few more years still, and Burleigh and Walsingham led the van of the host of the lay statesmen who have ruled the destinies of England.

As this change developed itself the accumulated lands and treasures of the Church assumed a new aspect in the eyes of the ruling powers. For many years they had served as the ultimate resort in times of necessity. The prizes of the Church were the pensions which rewarded important state services, or the bribes which procured them.

Towards the end of the reign of Henry VII. Wolsey,<sup>1</sup> then ambassador in Flanders from that monarch on a delicate mission connected with state matrimonial alliances, was instructed to promise the bishop of Gurk benefices in England to the amount of 1,000 nobles per annum, in addition to valuable English preferment already in his enjoyment, if the king's wishes should be accomplished. Castello, a legate from the pope

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers of Rich. III. and Hen. VII.*, Rolls Series, i. 427.

passing through England on an embassy to Scotland, was found by Henry VII. to be a useful man, and by similar retaining fees was enlisted in his service. ‘He<sup>1</sup> fell into great grace with the king,’ says Lord Verulam, ‘and great familiarity and friendship with Morton the chancellor. The king preferred him to the bishopric of Hereford, and afterwards to that of Bath and Wells, and employed him in many of his affairs of state that had relation to Rome. Having not long after ascended to the degree of cardinal, he paid the king large tribute of his gratitude in diligent and judicious advertisement of the occurrences of Italy.’ Cardinal Morton, the chief minister of Henry VII., had accumulated preferments as his salary and pension. Bacon says of Henry VII. in particular what had been true for several centuries of many sovereigns: ‘This king loved to employ and advance bishops, because having rich bishoprics they carried their reward upon themselves.’

James IV. of Scotland, a very devout though licentious prince, made one of his natural sons archbishop of St. Andrews<sup>2</sup> in his youth. He applied to Rome for the abbacy of Dunfermline for another who was in his eighth year. Like other sovereigns he had a cardinal engaged in his interests, and was not deemed irregular in pressing the pope and the cardinal for abbeys and bishoprics with which he wished to deal.

All this system was tottering to its fall, though few, if any, could read the signs of the times. When this worldly wealth in the next generation could no longer be made available for the purposes of the world, ‘the world knew its own,’ and took it from the grasp of the

<sup>1</sup> *History of Henry VII.* by Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of Ric. III. and Hen. VII.*, preface.



unwilling Church. Then pluralities and the resulting magnificence of state ecclesiastics stood confessed in their true character, and the ensuing changes were revolution as well as reform.

It is the generation preceding the commencement of these changes which is now before us. The series of old chroniclers now almost fails us. Alderman Fabyan and Polydore Vergil are poor substitutes for such men as Walsingham and his compeers. The state archives both in England and in Spain, as well as other countries, have been ransacked, and have shed much light on the tortuous diplomacy of the age. But the careful Rolls editor complains of 'the meagreness of contemporary narratives' and the paucity of documents. This poverty need not embarrass a work which is not a record of civil complications, nor even an ecclesiastical chronicle, but aims rather at illustrating the main lines of development by which the Church of England came to be what it is.

In a former chapter Archbishop Bouchier has been named as the primate who had to steer his course as best he might through the stormy times of the struggles of York and Lancaster, and who survived to unite the two houses by the marriage of Henry VII. to the daughter of Edward IV. He was succeeded by John Morton, who had followed faithfully the fortunes of the house of Lancaster till all was lost in the fatal fight at Tewkesbury. Then he made his submission to the conqueror, and was trusted as so faithful a man deserved. He was raised by Edward IV. to the see of Ely, and bore high office under that king. He is the bishop of Ely whom Shakspeare<sup>1</sup> describes as present in the council-chamber in the Tower after the death of

<sup>1</sup> *Richard III.*, act iii. sc. 4.

Edward IV., where Richard asks with that face of innocence for some of the 'good strawberries which grew in "my lord of Ely's" garden in Holborn,' that garden of which the 'shadow of a name' only survives in the dusky purlieus of Ely Place. The scene which Shakspeare has there so vividly drawn, where Richard suddenly affects passion, and the execution of Hastings follows with the rapidity of assassination, is taken from the Chronicle of Holinshed. He adopted the account given in the history of Richard III. by Sir Thomas More, who is believed to have received it from Morton.

In the judgment of some critics that history has been thought to have been written by Morton himself, from whom it passed to Sir Thomas More, who transcribed and 'edited' it, though it was not printed until some time after his death.<sup>1</sup> The writer seems to have been present at the death of Edward IV. and to speak with the ideas of Morton. On the other hand, these characteristics may have been stamped on the book by one who, like Thomas More, had been accustomed to hear Cardinal Morton converse on his reminiscences of those times.

Morton, when bishop of Ely, with other eminent men known to be faithful to the young princes, the children of Edward IV., was imprisoned by Richard. Having made his escape to the continent, he became one of the chief agents in the negotiations which led to the rapid success and final victory of the Earl of Richmond on the field of Bosworth. It was the inevitable sequel that on the death of Archbishop Bourchier, early in the following year, Morton should become primate of all England, and it suited papal policy not long afterwards to raise him to the rank of cardinal.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Rich., III., and Hen., VII., ii. preface.*

In the eventful reign of Henry VII. Morton played a very leading part. The character of this archbishop has been represented in different lights. Bacon says of him,<sup>1</sup> 'He was a wise man and an eloquent, but in his nature harsh and haughty, much accepted by the king, but envied by the nobility and hated of the people. But whatever else was in the man, he deserveth a most happy memory, in that he was the principal means of joining the two Roses. He died of great years, but of strong health and powers.'

An able lawyer and versatile statesman, versed in all the manifold intrigues of the European courts, as well as in the tortuous conspiracies of the two Roses, he must be credited with no small part of the great settlement which gave England rest for a century and a half. He leads the way for the series of great statesmen who are traced onward under the Tudor princes, and who will make famous their reigns to all times. A school of the highest statecraft perpetuated itself through several generations, but its rise must be found under Henry VII., of whom Bacon says,<sup>2</sup> and says well,—'He was not afraid of an able man. But contrariwise he was served by the ablest men that were to be found. Neither did he care how cunning they were, for he thought himself to have the master-reach. And as he chose well, so he held them up well. In twenty-four years' reign, he never put down or discomposed counsellor or near servant, save only Stanley, the Lord Chamberlain.'

As it was with the first of the Tudors, so was it with the son and the granddaughter. No age has been so fruitful in great men, no sovereigns have been so ably and faithfully served in spite of their manifold and

<sup>1</sup> *History of Henry VII.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

strange caprices. If it is a mark of greatness thus, 'not to be afraid of an able man,' but 'to be served by the ablest;' then by this test the Tudors were great, and by the same test the Stuarts were little. When they came in this succession speedily failed.

One other note of this administration and reign may well be admitted. The great change which was inaugurated by the First Tudor was the introduction of the rule of Law. Granted that he, like his descendants, loved arbitrary power and frequently played the tyrant, it was with the velvet glove of the law, rather than the iron hand of the warrior, that he, as well as they, held their subjects. Accordingly Bacon again observes of him with a profound sagacity that he 'was ever ready to grace and countenance the professors of the law: that as he governed his subjects by his laws, so he governed his laws by his lawyers.' 'He did much maintain and countenance his laws. Which, nevertheless, was no impediment to him to work his will. For it was so handled that neither prerogative nor profit went to diminution. Justice was well administered in his time, save where the king was party. But in that part both of justice and policy, which is the durable part, and cut as it were in brass or marble (which is the making of good laws), he did excel.' This policy, and this hitherto unknown supremacy of law, is the key to the rapid advance of England under the Tudors. If upon the whole law might rule fairly between man and man, the occasional excesses of royal authority, wrought as they were by obsequious lawyers under the forms of law, passed without much objection. For the present purpose it will be sufficient to add that this change alone sufficed to provide the Second Tudor with all he needed to break down the mediæval Church



system. With regard to a large part of the papal usurpations, Cranmer, Gardiner, Bonner, and the other able lawyers of Henry VIII., had little difficulty in proving that they ran counter to ancient English law. For the rest a willing Parliament furnished new statutes. Thus, not by the pressure of military dictation, but under the form of law, the revolution was wrought, and the Canon law, after centuries of conflict, was at last compelled to submit to the Imperial law of England.

Certainly this enthronement of law under the First Tudor must be deemed a great step towards the coming liberty, even if it seemed at first in the hands of that dynasty to provide a mask for their often arbitrary personal rule.

One of the legal measures of this reign<sup>1</sup> was to bring into greater power and activity a court, the name of which became accursed in England after the lapse of another century. The account of it given by Bacon is the following<sup>2</sup>:—

‘The authority of the Star Chamber, which before subsisted by the ancient common law, was confirmed in certain cases by Act of Parliament. This court is one of the sagest and noblest institutions of the kingdom.’ For beside the jurisdiction of the other courts of justice, ‘there was always reserved a high and preeminent power to the King’s Council, in causes that might concern the state of the commonwealth, which, if they were criminal, the Council used to sit in the chamber called the Star Chamber; if civil, in the White Chamber or White Hall. This court of Star Chamber consisteth of four kinds of persons: counsellors, peers, prelates, and chief judges. It discerneth also principally four kinds of causes: forces, frauds, crimes

<sup>1</sup> A.D. 1488.

<sup>2</sup> Bacon, *Hist. of Hen. VII.*; *Parl. Hist.*, i. col. 455.

various of stellionate [a legal class of fraudulence], and the inchoations or middle acts towards crime capital or heinous not actually committed. But that which was principally aimed at by this Act was force, and the two chief supports of force, combination of multitudes, and maintenance or headship of great persons.'

The admiration which Bacon, a lawyer of the days of Elizabeth and James, lavishes on this court will scarcely be the feeling of modern readers. Its abuses in the time of Charles I., which made it the execration of the country, will be the chief remembrances in connection with it. Yet it does not follow that the Parliament of 1488 did unwisely in giving it legal recognition. The power of the king in council was great, and the limits of his prerogative ill-defined. It may have been an absolute necessity, while the country was only slowly settling down after a long period of disturbance into a condition of law and tranquillity, that the crown should be strengthened in its dealing with that class of offences which, Bacon says, fell under the special jurisdiction of the Star Chamber—the use of 'force,' 'combination,' the factions of the great, or 'inchoate' treason. But after a century of order and the vindication of the supremacy of the law, Englishmen had been trained to a higher standard, under which a fuller sense of liberty and greater fitness for it could ill brook the despotic proceedings of such a court. Then the Stuart councilors strained its powers till they snapped under the tension, and the Star Chamber perished under the burden of general hatred.

These considerations connected with the reign of law bring out into greater prominence Cardinal Morton, archbishop and chancellor, who was so intimately connected with the policy of Henry VII. Reference has

been made already to Bacon's rapid survey of his character and powers. But a nearer view of him may be obtained from Sir Thomas More,<sup>1</sup> who in his youth served this able prelate :—'He was of a middle stature, and though stricken in age, yet bare he his body upright. In his face did shine such an amiable reverence as was pleasant to behold, gentle in communication yet earnest and sage. He had great delight many times with rough speech to his suitors, to prove but without harm what prompt wit and what bold spirit were in every man. In the which, as in a virtue much agreeing with his nature, so that therewith were not joined impudence, he took great delectation. And the same person, as apt and meet to have an administration in the commonwealth, he did lovingly embrace. In his speech he was fine, eloquent, and pithy. In the law he had profound knowledge, in wit he was incomparable, and in memory excellent. These qualities which in him were by nature singular, he by learning and use had made perfect. The king put much trust in his counsel, the state also in a manner leaned unto him when I was there.' Such was Morton as he had impressed himself on the mind and heart of an observer so acute as Thomas More. The great lawyer rather than the divine appears in the account which follows of certain conversations represented to have taken place at the cardinal's table. It can scarcely be doubted that these are founded on actual reminiscences of discussions which More himself had heard. The matters handled in this colloquial manner are such as these—the causes which tended to produce idle, disorderly, and thievish classes. The evil as well as uselessness of excessive punishments. The decay of thrift and husbandry. The

<sup>1</sup> *Utopia*, b. i., Robinson's translation.



causes of the superiority of the English to the French infantry. The true end of punishment. Such is the glimpse of the cardinal and chancellor of England who brought in the Tudors and closed the fifteenth century. He died in the year 1500, and was succeeded by Henry Dean. He brings us near indeed to the great revolution, for he it was who officiated in St. Paul's at the wedding of 'Prince Arthur of England and the Lady Catherine of Spain.' The chronicler Hall tells us that he will 'pretermit the rich apparel of the princess, the strange fashion of the Spanish nation, the beauty of the English ladies, the goodly demeanour of the young damosels, the amorous countenance of the lusty bachelors.' He will leave 'the goodly ballads, the sweet harmony, the musical instruments which sounded with heavenly noise on every side.' These things and many others which he enumerates we will 'pretermit' also, only observing how little the archbishop could imagine that the stately pageant in which he bore so prominent a part was the first step in that marvellous series of occurrences which led by sure sequence to the accession of Crammer to his seat, and the final severance of the Church of England from the Roman bondage.

Dean's successor was William Warham, whose primacy extends from 1503 to 1532. He rose to the archiepiscopal chair by the same path of legal and diplomatic service by which so many of his predecessors had ascended. But it will suffice here to glance at the date of his archiepiscopate to be aware that with him we are entering upon the period of the Reformation itself. His name takes us at one leap from the boyhood of Henry VIII. and the proud independence of the clergy to the day in 1532 when the clergy, by the hand of Warham, made that submission to the king of



their legislative privileges which binds them to this hour.

The archbishops named in this chapter were skilful statesmen, able lawyers, eminent ecclesiastics, and courtly prelates—men who were trusted, and rightly trusted, by their sovereigns in many difficult conjunctures. But what of the Church which they were guiding? what of all those questions of papal jurisdiction, and of immunities of the clergy? what of the contentions about Roman tribute, and other matters which had been agitated for centuries? what of the established dogmas of the Church itself? Of these things something must now be said while we seem to be listening, as it were, for the trumpet-blast of Reformation echoing from Germany over the North Sea waters.

With regard to doctrine a few words may suffice. It has already been noted <sup>1</sup> that when the civil broils were over, and Henry VII. safely seated on the throne, the record of martyrdom reopens its pages. But there is nothing to indicate any deep-seated conviction of doctrinal error among the masses of the people, nor any inquisitorial activity among the bishops. Englishmen are not often cruel except when they are thoroughly alarmed, as they were on opposite grounds in Mary's and Elizabeth's days. Yet the horrible statute *de heretico comburendo* from time to time took its course, and a heretic burning in Smithfield or carrying his fagot in penance was not deemed a very notable spectacle. The record of Alderman Fabyan under the year 1500 probably represents the general sentiment. 'And <sup>2</sup> in this year was an old heretic burnt in Smithfield.' That was all. Foxe did not know his name, and adds nothing to the record. Why should anyone care? 'An

<sup>1</sup> See page 330.

<sup>2</sup> Fabyan, p. 687.

old heretic.' Why did not the obstinate wretch bow to Holy Church and make his submission? Why should he profess to be wiser than great prelates? If he must be perverse and rebellious, let him go his way and trouble us no more; his ashes in Smithfield will be marvellously still, and it is only 'an old heretic' the less. Another generation began to think a little more of these things; and yet another; and then the sufferers had not died in vain. Yet amidst this undoubted indifference, in the course of which the ecclesiastics pursued so tranquilly the old intrigues for preferment, while the outward fabric of the Church seemed never more substantial, it cannot be doubted that the despised Lollards and the proscribed Wycliffite literature were planting seeds of truth, or instilling doubts whether Scripture did not condemn much that the Canon Law favoured. It is certain that Fitz-James, bishop of London, was seriously alarmed at the disaffection to the clergy, which he called Lollardy, among the citizens, several years before news came across the water of what Luther had done in Wittenberg; and that disaffection was not entirely unconnected with the secret teaching of Lollard doctrines for a century past. Yet it would be incorrect to ascribe much weight to that teaching among the various and influential sections of the city. The hostility to the clergy, which became so marked a feature of English life from the very commencement of the reign of Henry VIII., and which made men, unconscious of being anything but 'good Catholics,' so ready to pull them down, had other than doctrinal causes, which must now receive illustration.

There was a time, as we have seen, when men were ready to believe that a heaven-sent sovereign, guided by the spirit of God and ruling over the whole Church,

was the haven of refuge in which they might shelter. Kings might be unjust, barons might oppress, but God's holy Church, and the pope its all but divine ruler, might protect the injured and demand redress. It was but a passing dream, from which the extortion and vices and rivalries of the popes themselves speedily awakened the world. We have marked the spirit of opposition to papal exactions pervading nearly all classes, both of clergy and of laity, for some three centuries. We have now to ask, with the Reformation imminent, what had been the issue of the contest.

In brief it was this—Compromise, in which the people had gained nothing, but the several ruling powers had tacitly agreed to divide the spoil. Pope, king, clergy (at least the ruling ecclesiastics) surrendered not one of their extreme claims, as the day of Reformation-battle speedily showed. But they had learned some wisdom from the past, and by mutual adjustments adapted the exercise of their powers to the policy of the moment. The king could generally command papal support and sanction for any fairly reasonable project, unless he was counteracted by the wishes of some other potentate. The pope found his revenue most flourishing and his legates most cordially received when he favourably accepted the royal wishes. So the *entente cordiale* was the policy of the hour. Thus in the reign of Henry VII. and during half of that of Henry VIII. the ecclesiastical and civil powers, allowing for occasional jars or friction, moved as one machine.

The oaths by which Archbishop Warham, in the reign of Henry VII. and his predecessors, were bound to the See of Rome may illustrate the tangle into which the national and papal engagements of the archbishops had fallen. Strictly speaking, the oaths of allegiance

to the pontiff and the king were irreconcilable, and had been so for many generations.<sup>1</sup> Such a condition of things was only tolerable when pope and king moved together in some degree of harmony. It had been sorely strained in many a passage of previous history, and when at last Cranmer was called upon to decide finally between the two sides of his divided allegiance, compromise ceased to be possible. This is the oath which Warham took, and which his predecessors took :<sup>2</sup>—

‘I, William, archbishop of Canterbury, from this hour will be faithful and obedient to the blessed Peter, and the holy apostolical Roman Church, and our lord, the lord pope Julius the Second, and his successors canonically appointed. I will not be in counsel or consent or deed, that they lose life or limb, or are taken, or in any way have violent hands laid on them or suffer any injury on any pretext. I will open to no one to their loss any intent which they may entrust to me by themselves, by messengers, or by letter. I will aid the Roman Papacy and the regalia of St. Peter to hold and defend them against all men. The legates of the Apostolic See in going and returning I will treat with honour and provide with necessities. The rights, honours, privileges and authority of the Roman Church, of our lord the pope, and his successors I will conserve, defend, augment, and promote. I will not be in council, act, or treaty in which against our lord himself, or the same Roman Church, anything to the prejudice of their persons, rights, honour, status, and authority shall be devised. If I shall know that any such thing is by any one contrived or treated, I will hinder it to the utmost of my power, and as speedily as I can will signify it to our

<sup>1</sup> See Anselm's difficulty, page 177.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, iii. 647, *ex reg.* Warham.



lord or cause it to be so done. The rules of the holy fathers, their decrees, ordinances, sentences, arrangements, reservations, provisions, and the apostolic mandates I will observe with all my strength, and cause them to be observed by others. Heretics, schismatics, and rebels against our lord and his successors I will prosecute and assail to the utmost of my power. When summoned to a synod I will come unless canonically hindered. The threshold of the apostles I will visit by myself or my representative, yearly if the Roman Court be on this side the Alps, every other year if it be on the other side, unless I be absolved by apostolic license. I will not sell, give, pledge, nor grant, nor any way alienate the possessions of my see, even with consent of my chapter, without consulting the Roman pontiff. So help me God, and these holy Gospels of God.'

On receiving the pall the same oath was repeated in an abridged form. A judicious sovereign like Henry VII., with such a statesman as Cardinal Morton at his right hand, could manipulate the See of Rome for his own benefit. We find Henry applying to the pope<sup>1</sup> to excommunicate the Irish bishops who had supported the cause of Simnel; and we have the bulls of Innocent III.<sup>2</sup> excommunicating them accordingly, 1487. Not only so, but the same pope gave strong political support to the sagacious Tudor by a bull, 1488, threatening excommunication against any who should stir sedition on any pretext against Henry and his queen Elizabeth, while those who should aid him against any rebels should have plenary remission of all sins. Political remission of this kind must have tended in some respects to open the eyes at least of those against whom it was

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Rich. III. and Hen. VII.*, Rolls Series, 96.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, iii. 622.

directed to the audacity of such infringements of the authority of the Most High, and to prepare the way for the destruction of an authority so flagrantly abused. All Europe knew that these things were deliberately purchased at the court of Rome. The pecuniary support which that court was now able to reckon on from the Church of England was, however, jealously kept in check by the sovereign, and by none more carefully than by Henry VII. The papal taxation of the clergy in the time of Henry III. had been a subject of angry remonstrance.<sup>1</sup> Some instances of this continued extortion may now be given.

As the Crusades had served as a pretext for having taxation laid on the clergy by the earlier popes, so in the fifteenth century the alarming advance of the Turks was used in a similar manner. Amongst other records<sup>2</sup> we find a levy of one-tenth decreed upon all benefices in the year 1446. Again, in 1464 the clergy were desired<sup>3</sup> to grant 'sixpence in the pound at the least, which by likelihood shall be acceptable to our holy father,' for 'his blessed intent and purpose against the tyranny and cruelty of the Turk.' In 1488 we have a long bull of Innocent VIII.<sup>4</sup> promising plenary remission of all sins however enormous and grave, and howsoever often repeated, both once in life and in the moment of death, on certain conditions to those who should themselves fight the Turks, or 'should give to resist them at least, four, three, two or one florin of gold, or as much as the pope's commissary should arrange.'

Again, at the commencement of the sixteenth century, the infamous Borgia, Alexander VI., imposed on

<sup>1</sup> See page 220.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, iii. 547.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 597.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 626.

the English clergy a subsidy of one-tenth of their income for the defence of the faith against the Turks.<sup>1</sup> But 'our lord the king, considering the liberties and immunities of the realm, and guarding against dangerous precedents, persuaded the Most Holy Father to cease from his demand.' The king instead of this urgently required a subsidy against the Turks from the Convocation. Accordingly the clergy in convocation at St. Paul's, February 14, 1501, granted 12,000*l.* 'to defend the Christian religion against the Turks, the said money to be used at the king's discretion.' No doubt it was used in furtherance of the king's own purposes at Rome.

This mutual understanding between the civil and ecclesiastical potentates worked for the advantage of the stronger or the more politic of them from time to time. It was when the opposite intrigues of opposing sovereigns met at Rome that the practised subtlety of the Papal Court was most sorely tried. But, meanwhile, the interests of the Church, as distinguished from those of the pope, and the interests of the people were betrayed by this ill-omened harmony, during which the popes had been quietly entrenching themselves in a new position from which they have since agitated the world. The Councils of Pisa, 1409, of Constance, 1414, and Basle, 1431, had fairly claimed to represent the Churches of Europe. They had decreed what was the conviction of the Church of that age, both clergy and laity, that in the last resort, the pope was the servant not the master of the Church. The Council of Constance had unseated three papal claimants, and by its authority the cardinals had appointed Martin V. to the vacant seat. They decreed solemnly that the Roman pontiff was

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 646; see also letter of Henry to the pope, Ellis, *Orig. Letters*, i. 48.



inferior and subject to a general council. This decision was vigorously supported by the Council of Basle, and the pope of that day, Eugenius IV., was unwillingly constrained to accept and approve the decree. But councils pass away and leave no successors. Popes live, and the Papal Cabinet has been the most enduring and subtle power in Europe. The decree of those councils expressed the general mind of Europe, especially of France, whence this lower view of papal authority has received the name of Gallicanism. Ultramontanism, which is the other notion, that which holds the absolute infallibility and consequent despotism of the pope, has culminated in our own age, and has succeeded in branding Gallicanism as a heresy.

It was the policy of the popes of the remaining part of the fifteenth century first to ignore, then to explain away and deny, the decrees against their power at Constance and Basle, and also to push their personal authority into more direct contact with national interests by resident legates. The steady development of the principle of the false decretals, that archbishops are subject to the pope, was proceeding, and they were now to be regarded as little more than papal agents, through whom the universal primacy was exercised. The archbishops themselves played into the pope's hand, perhaps unconsciously. It was a severe mortification, and a serious blow to lawful authority, when a papal legate came into the realm and superseded their jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup> Were it not better that they should themselves bear that office, and so exercise supreme authority in England under the Canon Law? It was true that the statute of *præmunire* guarded the way against these encroachments. But who was to enforce that statute when it was the royal

<sup>1</sup> See page 183.



will that its terrors should sleep? It was found by the sovereigns, especially by such a politician as Henry VII. and his minister Cardinal Morton, that the power of a legate, judiciously used, superadded to the ancient jurisdiction of the archbishop of Canterbury, would give them that fulness of authority which would enable them to deal despotically with the whole Church of England. So Morton became, 1489, *legatus a latere* of the pope, and exercised in England the papal power, despite all statutes to the contrary.

It must be owned that there was much to tempt a wise ruler to such a step. The anomalies of jurisdiction were such that a large part of the ecclesiastics of England were practically under no control. The great abbeys had obtained from various popes exemption from episcopal supervision. It was notorious that corruption and profligacy were running riot through some of them; but who could interfere? The archbishop was helpless, but let him supplement his defective power by that of a papal legate, and every door must open to his summons. Thus, then, for a time all went smoothly. Henry VII. and Morton, Henry VIII. and Wolsey, made use of what were in fact fatal concessions. It was in the midst of a shameful conflict that Henry VIII. awoke to the consciousness of his position, and the strain on the papal tie snapped it for ever.

Thus, then, stood the relations between the royal and papal authority at the close of the fifteenth century. It may be well to glance in detail at the several points in which English and Canon Law had been at variance, as noted in the previous history. The result will be found the same—compromise. Yet neither English nor Canon Law had yielded. The Statutes of Mortmain, of Provisors, and *Præmunire* stood unrepealed. The

claim of the Common Law over all English subjects remained. But, practically, the weakness or the policy of the sovereigns frequently reduced these to a dead letter. The chief administrators of the affairs of the kingdom were the leading or rising ecclesiastics, who made it a study to reconcile as best they might the conflicting claims of Church and State. Thus, during the greater part of the fifteenth century, there was a truce between the two, and the laws of Edward III. were not followed out to their legitimate consequences until the relations of the civil and religious power were revolutionised by Henry VIII.

The Statute of Mortmain may receive the first consideration. It had very materially checked the absorption of land by the numerous ecclesiastical corporations. Yet it was possible in many ways to evade it. For example,<sup>1</sup> John Wheathamstead, abbot of St. Alban's, 1438, was bent on the acquisition of a manor which encroached inconveniently on the abbey lands. The chief baron of the exchequer was to be the medium, and Bekynton, the king's secretary, was to further the arrangement. Bekynton replied in a jocose strain affecting to be exceedingly shocked at being asked to deal with such a matter. But he plainly said to the abbot: 'Be well assured, father, that grants in mortmain are now odious in the eyes of all, and I doubt not that scarcely any more will hereafter be allowed.' In this instance the abbot succeeded. But, upon the whole, the endowments of the religious bodies received but few additions in the fifteenth century. Building, indeed, was active. Few of our larger ecclesiastical edifices are destitute of some traces of the work of this century. The stateliness of the Perpendicular style

<sup>1</sup> Bekynton, *Letters*, Rolls Series, i. xxvi. 114, ii. 358.

meets the eye continually. The unique grandeur of King's College Chapel, Cambridge, and the laboured richness of the monumental chapel of Henry VII. at Westminster, testify to the power with which mediæval artists could build even at the moment when the Classical revival was about to quench their art for ever. Monasteries<sup>1</sup> had ceased to find favour, and scarcely any were founded in this century, though many were dissolved. Colleges and hospitals had attracted the bounty of benefactors, and both Oxford and Cambridge owe much to this period. Chief among their founders shines forth the Lady Margaret, the mother of Henry VII.—the queen of England, had she not surrendered her right to her son. To say nothing of her colleges, those of Christ and St. John, in the University of Cambridge, which reverence her memory, a long line of illustrious Englishmen, none of them more worthy than the last, has made the title of Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity famous.

But it must be confessed that these founders for the most part were bountiful with the lands of other men. The Lady Margaret did not indeed spare her own lands, but for Christ's College 'the abbey of Croyke<sup>2</sup> given her by Henry VII., and God's house which was the foundation of Henry VI., did go a good way and pretty deep in this foundation.' So, also, St. John's College arose out of the dissolution of older houses, the account of which would belong rather to local than to general history. But the letter in which Henry VII. empowered Alcock, bishop of Ely, to dissolve the nunnery of St. Rhadegund, and to substitute his foundation of Jesus College in its place, not only illustrates this

<sup>1</sup> Pearson, *Historical Maps of England*. See page 250.

<sup>2</sup> Baker's Preface to *Funeral Sermon of Lady Margaret*, ed. Hymers.



subject, but bears too directly on impending changes to be altogether omitted. The date is June 12, 1496. It sets forth 'that the house or priory of religious women of Saint Rhadegund, its lands and tenements, have fallen into ruin or been wasted through the negligence and improvident or dissolute lives of the prioresses and religious women of the said house, beside their incontinence arising from the vicinity of the University.' It then empowers the bishop of Ely to suppress the nunnery and to found a college in its stead.

There is an equally discreditable account<sup>1</sup> of two nunneries dissolved by Fisher, bishop of Rochester, under authority of a bull of Clement VII., the lands of which were transferred to the new College of St. John. It will be quite sufficient to say that there was an investigation before the bishop, that the evidence was taken of various persons, including a midwife whose services had been required, that a priest was implicated in the matter, and so the nuns, or such as remained, went their way, and the college received their inheritance. These specimens will be quite enough to show that bulls of popes and royal grants had been making free with monasteries and ancient foundations, and familiarising the world with the idea of their destruction long before the hour of their doom had come.

If from the Mortmain Act we turn to the Statute of Provisors, it will be found untouched on the statute-book. But if we ask for the practice, 'compromise' must again be the reply. The pope had not withdrawn his claim to a universal patronage, but he had recognised the need for a guarded exercise of it. He was no longer in a position to defy national law, or kingly prerogative. On the other hand, the kings found a

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Fisher*, by Lewis, ch. xiii.



great convenience in a judicious use of papal sanctions to their measures, such as their ecclesiastical ministers seldom had much difficulty in procuring. When Archbishop Winchelsey died in 1313 Edward II. had his own views as to the successor, and the monks of Canterbury had theirs. The king procured a bull<sup>1</sup> from Clement V. addressed to the chapter, forbidding them to proceed to the election of an archbishop, because he had reserved to himself to fill the see by provision. Thus by an intrigue the king obtained the appointment he desired through the intervention of the pope. It is true that this was before the Statute of Provisors was passed, but such a useful precedent was not likely to be forgotten.

The ordinary course into which episcopal appointments had fallen before the Reformation was this. The dean and chapter elected the king's nominee, who was further recommended by the king to the pope. The pope usually accepted the recommendation, but always assumed that he was himself appointing to the see of his absolute will and pleasure. Then in due course followed consecration and the necessary legal formalities. The delays attending all this correspondence with the Roman See, the heavy fees which were required, and other inconveniences attending on difficulties and impediments interposed by the papal officials, were exceedingly onerous to the kingdom.

The usual form of the royal application to the pope for the confirmation of a bishop elect ran in abject terms. For example, Henry VI. recommends<sup>2</sup> Richard Praty for the see of Chichester. He first devoutly kisses the blessed feet of the most blessed father. He then speaks of his own solicitude for the appointment

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, ii. 424.

<sup>2</sup> Bekynton, *Letters*, Rolls Series, i. 53.

of holy and learned prelates, and sets forth the great virtues and excellences of Richard Praty. The petition then follows to the ‘most benign father of all.’ ‘We beg and humbly supplicate the Apostolic Blessedness to appoint him to the see of Chichester.’ Such was the tone in which kings could address the pontiff. It was always possible that the pope might either decline or interpose intolerable delays. It was, therefore, equally possible for the king to add some strong intimations of his will, after all the complimentary kisses of the feet. Henry VI. had earnestly recommended <sup>1</sup> Andrew Holes for the see of Coutances in Normandy. He had reason to think that ‘some faction might suggest or hiss something to the contrary into the sacred ears.’ He therefore bids the pope take notice that it is a matter fixed and settled in his mind, and that no one else but the said faithful clerk shall be preferred to the see in question.

The Statute of *Præmunire* had been the object of strong denunciation<sup>2</sup> by successive popes, but it remained on the statute-book in spite of them all. Perhaps it was hardly intended by its authors to be pressed to its extreme results. It might be thought to have fairly done its work in conjunction with the Statute of Provisors in checking the abuses of papal patronage of which so much was heard in former centuries. To stop all appeals to Rome was scarcely desired, and was certainly not attempted. But when in the reign of Henry VIII. the crown lawyers were asked what this Statute of *Præmunire* really involved, the answer laid the primate of all England with his clergy at the feet of the king. Meanwhile there was compromise on this as on all other parts of the papal question.

But what of the cause for which Becket died—the

<sup>1</sup> Bekynton, *Letters*, Rolls Series, i. 71.

<sup>2</sup> See page 364.

exemption of all orders of clergy from civil jurisdiction—the claim of the Ecclesiastical Courts not only to independence in strictly Church matters, but to the government of the clergy in nearly all their relations to society? This question still remained as it had stood for centuries. The Common Law and ancient usage of England claimed control over every subject of the realm. The Canon Law<sup>1</sup> denied their right to touch any member of the clerical body. Early in the reign of Henry VIII. these two codes came into sharp collision in a celebrated case which must not be anticipated. Meanwhile there was less compromise on this head than on any other of those on which the Canon Law was at variance with the law of the realm. The clerical privilege for the most part prevailed. Successive kings had sworn to preserve all the franchises of holy Church, and this was one of the chief. Of late (1462) Edward IV. by special charter, recognised in 1483 by Richard III., had confirmed the immunities of the clergy in the most ample manner.<sup>2</sup> The charter begins with an expression of the king's belief that the recent calamities of England had been due in no small degree to restraints on the liberties, prerogatives, and usages of the prelates

<sup>1</sup> If it be desired to see the text of the Canon Law on this matter, the following extracts from the *Corpus Juris Canonici* may serve:—

‘Since the emperor says that the laws do not disdain to follow the sacred canons, in which it is laid down generally, that for every crime a clerk ought to be convened before an ecclesiastical judge, no prejudice ought to be produced to the canons in this respect from any custom.

‘But especially in criminal causes, in no case can they be condemned by any but an ecclesiastical judge, even if there be a royal custom that thieves be judged before secular judges.’—*Decret. Greg.*, lib. ii. tit. i. cap. 8.

‘The lay judge must take care lest in any manner he condemn a clerk. If he shall do so he must be suspended by the Church on which he is known to inflict the injury, until acknowledging his fault, he shall make amends.’—*Instit. Juris Canon.*, lib. iii. tit. i.

<sup>2</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, iii. 583, 616.



and ministers of the English Church. Edward, therefore, declared that he wished to avoid the wrath of God, and would adhere to the institutes of the universal Church, to the canons and decrees of the holy fathers. He proceeded accordingly to grant to all degrees of those in holy orders, and to all religious persons under vows, that no officer of the crown, no civil court of the realm, should proceed against them in any way whatever. The civil authorities henceforth might not detain, or even hold examination upon them, for ‘felony, rape, treason, or any other transgressions whatsoever committed or purposed.’ But if any indictment should be preferred against such persons, the civil officer should at once transmit the same to the bishop or other ecclesiastical official to whom the jurisdiction pertained. Thereupon the ecclesiastical court was empowered to proceed according to Canon Law against the offender, and to pass final sentence without any hindrance from the civil power. If any civil magistrate should presume to interfere with these ecclesiastical proceedings, the censures of the Church contained in the canons were to be fully pronounced upon them. No prohibition issuing from the Royal Chancery, or King’s Bench, or other Court, was to stand in the way of the Church law. If by chance any accused person being apprehended declared himself of the clergy, then, on his own demand or that of the ordinary, he must be sent to the ecclesiastical judge, straightway, without further enquiry into the truth of his clerical pretension. The ecclesiastical judge was alone to pronounce whether the accused was a clerk or not, and he was not to be liable to any penalty under the Statute of *Præmunire*.

It might be supposed that charters of privilege such as these would have sufficiently secured the position of



the clergy. But in truth they counted for very little, and they could not override the law and custom of England.

In 1485, only two years after Richard's confirmation of the charter, Pope Innocent VIII.<sup>1</sup> wrote to Henry VII. vigorously remonstrating with him that 'priests taken and examined, not by bishops or others having jurisdiction, but by secular judges, contrary to all right and the decrees of the holy fathers and the constitutions of general councils, have been tortured and sent to the gallows.'

— The laxity of the Ecclesiastical Courts in dealing with grave moral offences, as contrasted with their severity in charges of heresy, has already been noticed. It can serve no purpose to make sweeping charges against the clergy of that age. Yet it is scarcely possible for their most zealous advocates to deny that the general moral tone of society was then very low indeed; that political crimes, grave moral offences, coarseness and indelicacy of thought as well as of language, were freely condoned, or indeed scarcely noticed except to point an attack upon an opponent. Apart from this the popularity of the reigns of the Tudors cannot be understood. Yet no one who has a moderate acquaintance with contemporary literature can fail to acknowledge that even in such an age the character of the clergy was at a very low ebb in the popular estimation; that the gravest moral charges circulated against them; and that they fell in no small degree through this moral weakness. The charitable hope may be permitted that exaggeration and calumny played no small part in this matter. But when the utmost has been allowed which charity may hope or concede on this score, enough

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 617.

remains on record in the decrees of popes, in the proceedings of English synods, in the investigations of the pre-Reformation bishops, to leave a most painful impression as to the condition of no small part of the clerical ranks.

The more this condition of things is recognised, the more invidious will appear the exemptions from civil jurisdiction mentioned in the charter of Edward IV., and confidently maintained by the clergy until Henry VIII. struck them to the earth. To the clerical mind it appeared a grievous scandal that a cleric accused, for example, of rape should be called upon to plead in a civil court, and his offence be bruited before all men. And such charges were not uncommon, nay, they were made in the grossest manner. The Caernarvonshire<sup>1</sup> men charged their priests before Henry VIII. with the systematic violation of their wives and daughters. The clergy ought to have seen that their cherished privileges were their greatest foes in this respect. Had they permitted clerical criminals to stand in the dock before their countrymen, the depth of the moral gangrene might have been probed and its progress checked. When things are 'hushed up,' the worst becomes possible, and certainly the worst will be believed.

There must be the reverse of pleasure in dwelling on the delinquencies of those who are gone to their account; but the events of the coming age, the fate of the monasteries, now so near at hand, cannot be dealt with apart from the reputation they had now for many years acquired. Henry VIII., with all his energy and indomitable will, could never have levelled them to the earth, if they had not already fallen low in public regard, even before anything but the whispers of a few poor

<sup>1</sup> Froude, *Hist. Hen. VIII.*, i. 85.

Lollards had ventured to question the grounds of their institution. It becomes, therefore, necessary to note something from the public records which may bear on the moral state of some at least of the great religious establishments.

The exclusive privileges of the clergy in matters of jurisdiction were working ill for their moral condition, and yet more ill for all the suspicions to which they were subjected. But in the monasteries it was still worse. A delinquent parish priest might be brought before his bishop or the bishop's official. These were for the most part great lawyers, and also high officers of state, and their judgment might be received with respect. But they had no jurisdiction in the great abbeys, which had purchased or obtained exemption from episcopal control. The monk acknowledged no jurisdiction but that of his abbot. \* Accordingly when brother John was caught in the very commission of a foul offence, and no man dared do more than deliver him up to the abbot's custody to be dealt with according to ecclesiastical law, the feelings and conscience of the people were sorely wounded. The great gates of the monastery closed upon him, and shut out the complaining world. Yet it was known that the code which prevailed within recognised not a *crime* but a *sin*. The crime remained unpunished, for the magistrate could not touch it; the sin was wiped out by a penance which the sympathising conscience of the judge too often made lenient enough. In a few weeks, perhaps, brother John came forth again, and ribald jest made free with him and with the injured complainant. How could such a system stand?

The case of the great abbey of St. Alban's is at once the best known of those relating to delinquent houses

in the reign of Henry VII., and the most startling in the conclusions which might be drawn from it. It has been seen that smaller institutions were somewhat freely dissolved and made over for collegiate and other purposes,<sup>1</sup> and that they fell by their inherent vices. But St. Alban's was no petty institution, in itself limited, and obscure in its remote insignificance. It was one of the most ancient, most wealthy, and most dignified in the realm. It stood on the great high road leading northward from the metropolis. Its guest chamber entertained travellers of rank on their way to and fro on the affairs of the kingdom. Its abbot raised his mitred head in Parliament among the greatest prelates of the realm. It was near enough to London<sup>2</sup> to be involved in its controversies and troubles. If publicity and greatness could be any warrant for at least decency, surely it might be found here. Yet the condition of this great abbey was such that when papal authority empowered Cardinal Archbishop Morton to visit the exempt monasteries, it received condign censure. This matter, however onerous it may be to give it admission into the printed page, is so grave in itself, in its consequences, and in the formation of opinion, that it must not be hastily dismissed. The charges against the monasteries made by the commissioners of Henry VIII. are often scouted as tainted with fraud, and treacherously invented for the purpose of confiscation. But a deliberate consideration of what pope and prelate had to say about the condition of great abbeys towards the close of the previous century is open to no such qualification. The excessive verbosity and repetitions of the ecclesiastical lawyers render it impossible to produce the documents unmutilated. Yet they shall be given in an abstract

<sup>1</sup> See page 404.

<sup>2</sup> See page 336.



more full than has previously been deemed necessary, and with all important points set forth with exactness.

In the first place must come a bull<sup>1</sup> of Innocent VIII. dated 1489, addressed to Archbishop Morton. It begins with reciting the benefits to religion flowing from the exemplary lives of the religious, and the fidelity to their rules in times past of the various orders of monks in England. Then it proceeds to say that 'for some time past in the province of Canterbury, the rule of life had been relaxed and the gentle yoke of contemplation laid aside. Observances had grown cold, and in some monasteries persons giving themselves to a reprobate mind were leading lascivious and dissolute lives.' The pope accordingly, in the discharge of his pastoral duty, and at the instance of his most dear son in Christ Henry VII., commits to Archbishop Morton full power to visit, reform, and bring to a strict observance of their rules all monasteries in his province. The enquiry was to be strict and peremptory into the manner of life of monks and superiors. If punishment was necessary, it must be done without any notoriety of trial. It might proceed to suspension, expulsion, excommunication, or interdict. If needful the secular arm was to be called in, and the power of the archbishop was to be in full apostolical vigour without restraint from any law, custom, or privilege whatsoever.

So ran the mandate of the pope, avowedly resting on serious complaints from the court of England. According to the tenor of the bull we find the proceedings of the archbishop against the abbot of St. Alban's as follows,<sup>2</sup> dated Lambeth, July 5, 1490:—'John by divine permission archbishop of Canterbury, primate of all England, legate of the Holy See, inquisitor, visitor,

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins, iii. 630, *ex reg.* Morton.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 632, *ex reg.* Morton.

reformer, and judge from the Apostolic See, to William, abbot of St. Alban's, greeting.'

Having recited the terms of the preceding bull, the document proceeds to the following effect:—'It hath come to our ears by public report, and by the testimony of many credible persons, that thou, the aforesaid abbot, hast long been guilty of simony, usury, dilapidation of the goods of the monastery, and hast been so remiss, negligent, and prodigal that for some time past thou and some of thy fellow monks having relaxed the rule, the observance of hospitality, alms, and other offices of piety has diminished. Hence, no few of thy monks giving themselves to a reprobate mind, lead a lascivious life, and often defile sacred places, even the temples of God, in company with nuns, the partners of their crimes.' Coming to particulars, the archbishop specifies the following grave charges. The admission of a certain married woman, who was living in adultery, first as nun and then as prioress, in the nunnery of Pray, the woman's husband being alive. Similar foul dealing with the nunnery of Sapwell, where good and religious women were displaced, and bad and even vicious women promoted. The consequence of all this in the unambiguous relations between some of the monks of St. Alban's and the inmates of these nunneries, are set forth with all the directness of legal indictments. Lastly, in the monastery itself and its estates, charges are made of harlotry within and without the walls, dilapidation of the goods, waste of the woodlands to the amount of 8,000 marks, and the extraction of jewels from the shrine of St. Alban himself.

Such an indictment might make an unprepared reader stand aghast. He would, no doubt, expect some severe and summary proceedings, remembering what

the Church could do when heresy was but suspected. But he would show his little acquaintance with the action of the Church against clerical immorality in such an expectation. To this day English ecclesiastical law carries the taint derived from the laxity of the morals of past ages. Even now from time to time the spectacle astonishes the world when some clerical delinquent for a scandalous offence serves a term of suspension from his office, and is then restored to his loathing parishioners. The English ecclesiastical law still refers to the constitutions of Ottoboni;<sup>1</sup> it has been pared away, modified, altered, but never reformed.

The conclusion, then, of Archbishop Morton is this: 'We personally and charitably admonish thee, William, that thou oughtest to have reformed these things thyself; but failing this, by the authority committed to us, we peremptorily warn and command thee, thy monks, the said prioresses, and nuns, to cease from all such evil practices, and to conform to the strict monastic rule.' For this purpose a term of thirty days was assigned, on the expiration of which the abbot was to certify, by his letters duly sealed, what had been his action in the matter. Failing this, the archbishop would, in person or by deputy, visit the abbey, and enforce the law against all offenders.

So the chief delinquent was to reform himself and report upon that and on the reform of the other delinquents. Let those who list generalise from this flagrant example: it is sufficient for us to say, that with such an evil repute, and with such laxity of jurisdiction, the monasteries were tottering to their fall.

Nor must we hesitate to say that immorality, even in the very highest prelates, was not condemned by the

<sup>1</sup> Page 227.

opinion of the age, provided it confined itself within certain recognised bounds of outward decency. It was the scandal rather than the sin which was bewailed, and in ordinary cases a slight penance easily dealt with the sin. No illustration of this is needed. It is confessed ; and with this remark a hateful subject may be dismissed.

So the old Church was passing swiftly on to its judgment, and no man knew. All might be summed up in Scripture phrase : So Henry VII. slept with his fathers, and Henry his son reigned in his stead. In stillness and in beauty his dust has slept these long centuries. It may be that the Tudor style, which bears his name, lacks something of the power of the earlier Pointed architecture. Yet there is no sepulchre on English soil so grand as that which Henry raised for himself, and in raising completed the great church at Westminster which is itself a history. With the building of his chapel at Westminster mediævalism died out in beauty.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE PREPARATION FOR THE REFORMATION.

Two extreme schools of geology have in past times contended for supremacy. The one has attributed all the great changes of the earth's surface to sudden and violent convulsion. The other declines to recognise anything but the gentle action of existing forces continued through untold myriads of years. The thought which unites both of these may be most true, and certainly is most profound. While the ordinary operations of nature are taking their gentle way with that which is visible on the surface, power beyond computation may be gradually accumulated in the subterranean chambers. Steam may be generated in quantity and under compression inconceivable. Chemical changes in vast central retorts may produce gaseous elasticity of energy beyond calculation. The gradual wearing away of the earth's surface by rains and torrents and the ceaseless currents of the ocean may be destroying grain by grain the delicate balance of the continents. Year by year, century by century, the awful storage of pent-up power may be gathering until the moment arrives when it can no longer be restrained. Then in storm of fire, in deluge of waters, in earthquake, it bursts forth. Again it subsides; it has spent its force; the world may be devastated and heaving yet with the mighty convulsion, but it is new. Yet the thoughtful mind will dwell not altogether on the crisis of the agony of a world, but

rather on the vast preparation of what are to us infinite forces which the Creator silently accumulates in the lapse of centuries.

So in history, the revolution, which leaps forth suddenly, and changes as in a moment the destiny of nations, by its tragic interest enchains the imagination. Yet the manifold powers which work in human society; the direct might of true and immutable principles; the slowly gathering explosive force of internal corruption; the gradual shifting of the balance of social order by the changes and developments of education and of wealth;—the action of all these, gathering force for centuries and leading on to the catastrophe, will most attract the philosophic mind.

At the moment in the history of the Church of England when the great catastrophe of the Reformation is at hand, and those who are to be amongst the chief actors in its stormy scenes are unconscious of coming troubles, such reflections as these are natural and true. The preceding pages have been written in vain if some keynote has not been sounded for this tone of thought. The freer life of the Saxon Church; the proud independence of the Conqueror; the close wrestle of Norman king and pontiff; the laws by which many parliaments strove to beat back the sacerdotal bondage;—these have been pulses of a political life never extinct through many centuries, and ready, whenever the opportunity might come, to grapple with the pontifical tyranny, which it felt to be dishonourable.

Nor can it have been in vain that men had laboured, suffered, and died for nobler issues. It has been noted as an equal mistake to suppose, on the one hand, that the Lollards had any influential hold upon English thought, or, on the other hand, to assume that their share was

inappreciable in the preparation for the coming revolution. It is the part of many earnest workers and sufferers for forgotten or misrepresented truths insensibly to leaven public opinion. Insomuch that some who cast out their name as evil are unconsciously and gradually influenced by their teaching. Thus many thoughts were working in men's minds which were seminal of the Reformation. Doubts as to the real limits of papal authority; notions of the true character of a minister of God as a shepherd of the flock; a strong impression that the Word of God was the ultimate standard of truth;—these and other ideas were widely disseminated among many to whom the name of Lollard was an abomination. These also were preparing the national mind for the change which was at hand.

Moreover, the conviction of the inveterate worldliness and moral corruption which infected the ecclesiastical and monastic orders had entered deeply into the national conscience. Enough has been alleged from the records of those times to show that this was an element now falling into the line of the gathering forces which were soon to be let loose on the mediæval Church.

These several influences have been spoken of, each in its place and degree. But another remains which is neither political, social, nor spiritual, though it has intimate relations with all. It possesses a power the weight of which neither man nor Church nor party fully knows, until, through perversity or neglect, it is found enlisted in the opposing ranks. It is the intellectual force, the weight of learning, the keen edge of criticism, the analysis of philosophy, the manifold resources of genius. These had been gathering their armaments, and when the crisis of the struggle came, they took their place for the most part in the anti-papal ranks. It may be well,



therefore, to complete this part of the history by a brief review of some recent movements in the learning of the age which preceded the Reformation.

The older Universities of Europe, including those of England, were completing the third century of their existence. They had received a mighty impulse from the great schoolmen who were their glory ; but the impulse had exhausted its energies, and no new enthusiasm followed. Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and others had built up those scholastic systems which displayed the resources of their own intellects, but only tended to cramp the lesser minds which followed them. Intricate metaphysical reasonings, whose object was not the investigation of abstract truth, but rather the discovery of some scientific statement which might be compatible with established Roman dogmas, occupied and perplexed the student. Independent study of Holy Scripture was almost extinct, and the dogmatic systems of the great schoolmen reigned instead. The elegancies of literature had vanished under the pressure of the heavy load of the dominant learning.

In this condition of the schools of Europe two almost simultaneous events stirred the stagnant mass—Constantinople fell under the power of the Turks, 1453 ; the art of printing with movable types, whatever be its precise date, came into use not many years before that remarkable era. It is impossible to estimate over-highly the result of the former of these, in so far as it tended to open to Europe the treasures of Greek literature. The clear thought, the delicate balance of the language, the comparative freedom of speculation, opened up a new world to the student. The Christian Scriptures themselves, together with the earlier Chris-



tian writers, were made accessible in the original. Greek had been practically all but unknown in Western Europe for many centuries. Even Aquinas had been imposed upon by a dexterous forger, who presented to him a catena of supposed quotations from the great Greek writers, Basil, Athanasius, and others, which admitted the supremacy of the pope. Subsequent ages, since the Greek literary treasures were unlocked, have looked wistfully for these marvellous extracts in the mighty tomes of those great masters, and have looked in vain. When the refugee Greeks, flying from their ruined or desecrated fanes, taught their language and opened their books to Europe, one great stride was made towards liberty of thought. They found shelter in Italy<sup>1</sup> even before the final collapse of the Eastern Empire. In Rome Pope Nicholas, 1447–1455, became the patron of the new learning, and ‘sharpened<sup>2</sup> those weapons which were soon to be used against the Roman Church.’ The great Florentine family of Medici used their commercial relations with the East to import precious manuscripts of classical antiquity. As the fifteenth century passed towards its conclusion, the presses of Aldus and other famous Italian printers were pouring forth their treasures of ancient literature; those of Germany were in full activity, and England was following in the train. This mere indication of the intellectual revolution which was in progress during the fifteenth century is all that can be permitted within these limits. It is not possible here to name the illustrious scholars of that age who, to use the language of Hallam, ‘lost the hope of permanent glory, which can never remain with imitators, or such as trim the lamps of ancient sepulchres.’ They gave themselves to the

<sup>1</sup> Hallam, *Middle Ages*, chap. ix. part 2.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon, c. 66.

work of disinterring, emending, and publishing ancient manuscripts. The intellectual debt which posterity owes to their industry cannot be estimated. Somewhat slowly the light thus kindled in Italy broke upon England. But before the fifteenth century closed some of its rays had begun to shine through the mediæval gloom. It is to the reign of Henry VII. and the primacy of Cardinal Morton that the introduction of Greek learning into England must be referred. In that reign Linacre, an Oxford scholar of eminence, accompanied an embassy into Italy. There he not only studied medicine, in which he became famous, but under the tuition of the Greek refugee Chalcocondyles was introduced to the new learning. He brought the precious acquirement to his native land, and has the glory of being one of the first teachers of Greek in his own University of Oxford. Associated with him in this work was William Grocyn, who studied under the same teacher, and has the honour of having taught the Greek language not only to a generation of his own countrymen, but to the most illustrious scholar of his age, Desiderius Erasmus. In the last ten years of the waning fifteenth century, the same space of time within which the new world of America threw open its gates to Europe, that Oxford school of the Greek language sent forth on their divergent paths famous scholars, who for themselves lived a generation too early, but for the religious freedom of those who followed, lived not in vain. Erasmus, with his chosen friends, rejoiced in the bracing air which blew over the wide expanse of human thought and Scripture freedom. They opened their windows to receive it. They sent its invigorating and purifying influences through the cells of the ancient learning. But they themselves went not forth to the free land from

which it drew its power and its sweetness. The ancient religion held them bound within its cells. If the blast blew yet more freshly or even fiercely, until the mouldering edifice tottered, these conservative spirits drew back the closer within. They died in the Roman communion; one of them (for Sir Thomas More must be counted in their ranks) in the vain attempt to resist the loosening of that Papal bolt of supremacy which had barred the progress of human freedom and the Word of God for centuries. But their history, at least in its earlier phases, belongs to that work of preparation now under review.

John Colet<sup>1</sup> was the son of a successful London citizen whose wealth he inherited. The older learning he had already mastered in Oxford, when Grocyn and Linacre brought with them from Italy the new and attractive delights of Greek literature. He was not content with their borrowed light, and himself visited the great Italian schools, whence he brought back one pre-eminent gift to his native land—the study and the exposition of the text of the New Testament itself, instead of authorised comments upon it.

Returning to Oxford, he lectured in public on St. Paul's Epistles.<sup>2</sup> He was not thirty years of age. He had no degree in divinity, then usual in those who assumed to teach it. Yet, says Erasmus, who was among his hearers, 'there was no doctor, no abbot, or dignified person who did not frequent and even take notes of his lectures.' In 1504 Colet was made Dean of St. Paul's by Henry VII., 'that<sup>3</sup> he might be president of his college, whose epistles and learning he loved so well.' He introduced into his cathedral the same methodical

<sup>1</sup> Seebohm's *Oxford Reformers*, and Lupton's Editions of Colet's works, &c.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Dean Colet*, by Erasmus.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



exposition of the New Testament which had attracted so much notice in Oxford, and which now drew crowds not only of the ecclesiastics but of the London citizens.

It is difficult for one unversed in the scholastic system which had reigned so long in the schools, and had therefore dominated the pulpits of Europe, to understand the revolution which Colet's expository lectures involved. The authoritative method had reigned, which closed the paths of private and individual search into Holy Scripture, and bade the reader ask only what had been declared to be its meaning by the great teachers of the schools. But, to pass over this, a principle had been derived from the earlier fathers, and carried into exaggerated proportions by the schoolmen, which effectually darkened the Word of God. This was the doctrine of the fourfold meaning of every passage of Scripture, of which we may allow Tyndale, the illustrious translator, to give his account.<sup>1</sup> 'They divide,' said he, 'the Scripture into four senses, the literal, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical. The literal sense is become nothing at all, for the pope hath taken it clean away, and hath made it his possession. He hath partly locked it up with the false keys of his traditions, ceremonies, and feigned lies, and partly driveth men from it with violence of sword; for no man dare abide by the literal sense of the text, but under a protestation, "If it shall please the pope." The tropological sense teacheth what we ought to do. The allegory is appropriate to faith, and the anagogical to hope and things above. . . . Thou shalt understand that the Scripture hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave,

<sup>1</sup> Tyndale, *Obedience of a Christian Man*.



thou canst never err or go out of the way. And if thou leave the literal sense, thou canst not but go out of the way.' Tyndale proceeds to acknowledge that there are proverbs, similitudes, and allegories in Scripture, as in other books, but then the inner meaning of these is that literal sense for which he pleads, and which must be sought out. He allows also that all preachers of the Word may freely apply the words of Scripture in many figurative ways to the edification of their hearers. But then, he says, such 'an allegory proveth nothing, neither can do. For it is not the Scripture, but an ensample or similitude borrowed of the Scripture, to declare a text or a conclusion of the Scripture more expressly, and so root it and grave it in the heart.'

It was the work of the '*new learning*' to rescue and restore the literal sense of Scripture. In this work Colet and Erasmus, and others of their school, opened the door by which the bolder and more enlightened spirits of the age which was dawning entered in and took possession once more of the heritage of the people of God, the Word of their Father. So Tyndale proceeds to urge. 'The greatest cause of the decay of the faith, and this blindness wherein we now are, sprang first of allegories. For Origen and the doctors of his time drew all the Scriptures unto allegories; whose ensample they that came after followed so long, till they at last forgot the order and process of the text, supposing that Scripture served but to feign allegories upon. . . . Yea, they are come to such blindness that they not only say the literal sense profiteth not, but also that it is hurtful and noisome, and killeth the soul. Which damnable doctrine they prove by a text of Paul, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." So, say they, the literal sense killeth, and the spiritual sense giveth life.

We must, therefore, say they, seek out some chopological sense.' Tyndale then gives his own exposition of that passage, and adds the acute and profound remark: 'God is a spirit, and all his words are spiritual. . . . So is it of all the promises of God. All God's words are spiritual if thou have eyes to see the right meaning of the text, and whereunto the Scripture pertaineth. . . . There is no story nor gest, seem it never so simple and vile to the world, but that thou shalt find therein spirit and life and edifying in the literal sense; for it is God's Scripture, written for thy learning and comfort.' Thus bluntly and absolutely the clear direct mind of Tyndale swept away the technical methods which had been used to make the thrust of God's Word swerve from its mark. It would be incorrect to assume that Erasmus and Colet, with their more refined culture and conservative feelings, repudiated the ancient fourfold interpretation in the same manner, though they spoke strongly of its abuses. On the contrary, Colet<sup>1</sup> acknowledged all four modes of dealing with Holy Scripture, though he did it in a guarded manner. In truth, the question really is, not whether Scripture may be fairly commented on in these various manners, but whether some forced 'anagogical,' or 'allegorical,' meaning shall be thrust upon the text, and authoritatively quoted to bind the heart and mind of the Christian. For example, when 'they said, Lord, here are two swords,' must we understand that the Lord conferred spiritual jurisdiction? When it is recorded that the greater light was to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, are we authoritatively informed that the pope, ruling over the Church, which is the realm of light, is greater than the civil potentate whose dominion is over the

<sup>1</sup> Colet, *Hierarchies of Dionysius*; Lupton, 106, 112.

darkened earthly state? It was the recoil from this abuse which seemed to them to make Scripture but a mass of darkened sophistry, which induced Tyndale and men of his school to reject in their clear decisive manner the whole system of interpretation. And it was well. They felt that he would best hearken to the Word of God who should simply let it speak to his own soul in its manifold harmonies. Thus, receiving 'as a little child' his Father's message, and taking the literal words as they were given, the marvellous fulness of the inner spiritual life of the words should feed his soul.

The subject is too long to pursue, but to avoid misapprehension some further elucidation is needed. It was no meagre or fanatical literalism for which such men were contending. None has explained this more clearly than one of the most learned Cambridge divines<sup>1</sup> of the days of Elizabeth. 'We affirm that there is but one true, proper, and genuine sense of Scripture, arising from the words rightly understood, which we call the literal. And we contend that allegories, tropologies, and anagoges are not various senses, but various collections from one sense, or various applications and accommodations of that one meaning.' This 'literal' or genuine sense he further declares may not be always that which the words immediately suggest, as when the Lord bids one pluck out the offending right eye. It appears, therefore, that what these Reformers meant by the 'literal sense,' is that meaning of the Word of God which is obtained by close and accurate study of the text itself, viewed in all its bearings and with all its connections. Such a 'literal sense' might prove to be allegorical or typical, or at least to include such applications. But whatever it might be, it must come not

<sup>1</sup> Whitaker, *Disputation on Holy Scripture against Bellarmine*, Q. V. 2.



from mere authority or tradition, not from a supposed necessity of every text having four meanings, not from anything that was arbitrary, but from the actual letter itself. This, said Whitaker, is sound argument, 'because it is certain that that which is derived from the words themselves is ever the sense of the Holy Spirit; but we are not so certain of any mystical sense, except when the Holy Spirit himself so teaches us.'

Colet's life had run its course six years before Tyndale's New Testament saw the light; but he and other men of the 'new learning' were the precursors of that noble work when they dared to discourse upon Scripture as conveying a plain message to plain men, a message which might be learned by a careful study of the sacred text itself in its literal meaning. In his recoil from the scholastic system Colet stood on perilous ground, yet to a friend like Erasmus he could speak thus of the great Aquinas himself: 'Why dost thou talk to me of that man? If he had not been full of arrogance, he would not have defined all things with such temerity and pride. If he had not somewhat of the worldly spirit, he would not have defiled the whole doctrine of Christ with his own profane philosophy.' Erasmus could not at first understand his friend's indignation; but he afterwards confessed that Dean Colet was right, and that Aquinas was sensibly lowered in his estimation also. He was able in his later years to repeat the simple advice of Colet<sup>1</sup> to perplexed minds. 'Be satisfied with the Bible and the Apostles' Creed. Let those who will, dispute about all the rest.'

When Colet was dean of St. Paul's Fitz James held the see of London. He was a man of narrow persecuting spirit, and early in the reign of Henry VIII. he

<sup>1</sup> Erasmus, *Pietas Puerilis*; Seebohm, 106.



presented articles before Archbishop Warham accusing his dean of heresy. They were trivial charges, but men had been in peril before-time for at least as little. The archbishop, himself not untouched by the changing spirit of the age, rejected them with indignation. Colet closed his noble and pious life in 1520, having left to succeeding ages his grand legacy of St. Paul's School, which still remains to do illustrious service. To the foundation of that school he dedicated his patrimony. To save it from the ecclesiastical abuses of the age he placed it under the guardianship of the Mercers' Company of the City of London, who have been its faithful custodians. The great fire of London, which destroyed the ancient cathedral, swept away also whatever of Colet's buildings had endured. His object was to expel the old monkish Latin, 'the adulterate Latin' with which 'the old Latin speech was poisoned.' 'The children should be taught good literature, both of Latin and Greek, specially Christian authors who wrote their wisdom in clean and chaste Latin,' for his 'intent was by this school specially to increase knowledge, and the worship of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, a good Christian life and manners in the children.' For this school the good dean found a congenial master in Lilly, another of the travelled band of Greek scholars. Lilly was the godson of Grocyn, the father of the English school of Greek. He had visited Greece and lived some time in Rhodes that he might perfect himself in its tongue, and was now appointed the first master of Colet's school. The antiquated tools of an obsolete system were not to be used in this workshop of the new learning. The dean applied himself to the production of a grammar which might teach Latin in its purity. Erasmus, Linacre, and others of the band

lent their co-operation. The book was at last completed by Lilly, and as 'Lilly's Grammar' it is known. The modified form of it which has come down to modern times, but seems at last doomed to be merged in newer systems, is known, or was known to boys of former generations, as the Eton Grammar.

Those who would learn the judgment of a pure-minded, devoted man like Colet on the condition of the Church of that age, then unconsciously awaiting the sweeping Reformation which followed before that generation had passed away, should read his sermon before the Convocation of 1511 on 'Not being conformed to this world,' Rom. xii. 2. It is worthy of Latimer himself, though Latimer's words to the Convocation of 1536 are more sharp and stinging. He chides the bishops for their ambition, and tells them that 'a prelacy in the Church is nothing but a ministration.' He declares that 'the greater number of priests give themselves to feasts and banqueting, spend their time in vain babbling, are addicted to hunting and hawking, and are drowned in the delights of this world.' With covetousness and secular occupations, he says that all orders in the Church were infected—'all the corruptness, all the decay of the Church, all the offences and scandals of the world come from the covetousness of the priests'; while 'continual secular occupation spotteth the face of the Church.' Then he speaks on the subject already frequently noted since the days of Chaucer and Wycliffe, the estrangement of the laity, which first weakened and then destroyed the old system, as it destroyed the Church of Charles, and may yet destroy its modern successor if the breach should widen. On this head Colet's strong but wary language may be quoted more fully. 'In this age we are sensible of the contradic-

tion of lay-people. But they are not so much contrary to us as we are to ourselves. Their contrariness hurteth not us so much as the contrariness of our own evil life. We are also nowadays troubled with heretics (men intoxicated with strange opinions), but the heresies of them are not so pestilent and pernicious to us and the people as the naughty lives of priests. There be two kinds of heresy: one arising from perverse teaching, and the other from a naughty life; of which two this latter is far worse, and more perilous, reigning in priests who do not live like themselves nor priestly, but secularly to the utter and miserable destruction of the Church of God.' Then for the question of Reform. He tells them they want no new laws. 'There be already laws enough, if not too many.' He would therefore have the canons read and enforced. The bishops must be strict about ordination. 'Here lies the original and spring-head of all our mischiefs that the gate of ordination is too broad, hence the multitude of priests. It is not enough for a priest to construe a collect, to put forth a question, to answer a sophism. An honest, a pure, and a holy life is much more necessary; approved manners, competent learning in Holy Scripture, some knowledge of the sacraments, but chiefly the fear of God and love of eternal life.'

He would have the canons that regulate admission to benefices enforced, that 'boys and fools, and ill-livers' might be excluded. Simony should be restrained, and residence enforced—hunting, gambling, usury, carrying of weapons should be debarred to the clergy. Frequenting taverns, licentiousness of life, should be prohibited. The bishops should be chosen duly as to a spiritual office, and should devote themselves to their



proper duties; not spending their revenues on costly buildings, pomp, feasting, hounds, and kinsfolk.

If they would thus reform themselves they might reform the laity. 'If ye will have the lay-people to live after your wish and will, first live yourselves after the will of God: and so (trust me) ye shall effect in them whatsoever ye would.'

So spoke to the assembled bishops and clergy one of the very wisest and best of the generation that preceded the Reformation, and he spoke in vain. The malady was deeper than he knew. The system was in itself corrupt, and no enforcement of canons could avail to heal it. Which side Colet would have taken had he lived some few years longer can never be known. Whether he would have gone forward with Latimer, or drawn back into the old system with his friends Fisher and More, who shall say? He was taken away from the evil to come, if also he lost some of the coming light. Of his pure spirit his friend Erasmus writes thus:—'A person that in a high fortune and abundance was led and governed not by his nature, but by Christ. In a word, I shall not doubt to reckon him in the catalogue of my saints, though he be never canonized by any pope.'

The name and work of Colet's friend Erasmus belong to the history of European literature. Holland, France, and Germany were scenes of his life and labours. Yet England, also, was his debtor, and to England he owed some of the means of his greatness. It was in or about the year 1498 that this illustrious scholar first visited England. Grocyn and Linacre had made Oxford, not indeed a seat of Greek learning (that was yet to come), but a place where Greek might be learned, and the object of Erasmus was to acquire that language. He



gained more than this ; he became the intimate friend of Colet, whose earnest love for the Word of God, unaffected piety, and aversion from the worn-out scholastic philosophy were destined to have a decisive effect on the intellectual life and work of Erasmus. Hitherto the use of logical subtlety, the mere trick of word-play, in which the followers of Duns Scotus had been trained, had seemed to Erasmus the pride of academical skill. He found in Colet one who denounced all this as dulness and stupidity, and he was afterwards able thus to write to his friend of the scholastics of their age:—‘ They seem to me to make men sciolists and contentious. They exhaust the mental powers by a dry and biting subtlety without infusing strength or vigour. They involve everything in obscurity while they try to explain it. One dispute gives rise to another, and with wonderful gravity we fight about straws. We audaciously lay down rules according to which God has performed his mysteries, when it might be better for us to believe that a thing *was* done, leaving the question of *how* it was done to the omnipotence of God. To show our ingenuity we sometimes discuss questions which pious ears can hardly suffer ; as, for instance, when it is asked whether the Almighty could have taken upon Him the nature of the devil or of an ass. Wherefore, my dear Colet, in having battled for the restoration in its pristine brightness of the old and true theology you have engaged in a work of the highest honour.’ Still some years were yet to elapse before Erasmus definitely entered on the same combat. When he threw himself into the battle the weight of his learning, the exquisite polish of his style, the keen edge of his sarcasm, and the easy play of his wit scattered the cloud of dull scholas-

ticism on every side and made it the laughing-stock of Europe.

Erasmus left England in 1500, having formed there, among other friendships, an intimacy with Thomas More of famous memory, which led to a correspondence full of inimitable pictures of contemporary history touched with a playful wit. Then came five years of close, and to a great extent preparatory labour, especially, as he wrote to Colet, 'in the garden of the Greeks.' For, as he said, 'he had learned by experience that without Greek one can do nothing in any branch of study; for it is one thing to conjecture and quite another to judge; one thing to see with other people's eyes and quite another to believe what you see with your own.' In 1505 Erasmus returned to England and enjoyed the society of his friends of the new learning. Colet, More, Grocyn, Linacre, Lilly were members of that illustrious circle which was to do so much for the coming generations of Englishmen. His chief object in this was to provide means for a visit to Italy, which was still the head-quarters of Greek learning. Without this Erasmus deemed himself inadequately furnished for the great work of his life. That visit achieved, he returned to England to find a new monarch on the throne, a friend of learning, munificent and generous. For all this Henry VIII. was in his earlier years. On his arrival Erasinus beguiled the weariness of an illness which supervened on the fatigues of his journey by writing the renowned satire which he entitled 'The Praise of Folly.' It was written in the congenial atmosphere of the house of his friend Thomas More. Each class of society was made in its turn the victim of that merciless sarcasm, or mirth-arousing fun. It has lost much of its edge now, as contemporary satire always must in

the lapse of ages. The follies of our ancestors are laid in the dust with them. We read the ridicule which they encountered rather that we may learn what were their ways of life and thought, than to point a jest at their expense. Our laughter is moved by the ridicule that marks the folly which we see in the society of our own day. Our pity is rather reserved for the folly which has run its course and lies in the gravity of the tomb. But when each rank of civil, military, ecclesiastical, and academical society was made in its turn the butt of the keenest arrow of satire, each could afford to laugh until its own turn came to be the victim. Nevertheless, the scholastic theology, the monks, nay the pope himself, received wounds which were almost fatal. In ceasing to be venerable, in being brought down to be the jest of Europe, they lay more open than before to the heavier blows of argument which wrecked the ancient systems. 'The Praise of Folly' was written in England, but it was published in Paris, and in a few months was reprinted seven times. This was seven years before Luther affixed his theses to the gate in Wittemberg, but it was a preparation for that graver challenge of a very different mind. In 1511 Erasmus became Professor of Greek in Cambridge, if that title does not convey too modern an idea of his functions. Fruitful seeds were those which he deposited in that not too congenial soil. The band of Cambridge Reformers who laboured, suffered, and died in the next half century cannot be altogether dissociated in their intellectual life from that germ of Greek which Erasmus sowed there. To the time of this residence must be referred his visits to the shrines of 'St. Thomas of Canterbury' and 'our Lady of Walsingham.' It is hazardous to attempt any abridgment of the Colloquies



in which he afterwards told the story. But it seems needful to take a glance at the shrines of England in the days when destruction was imminent, yet few marked the gathering tempest. From Cambridge to Walsingham, a village not far from the northern coast of Norfolk, was no distant journey for Erasmus. He afterwards threw his impressions of the visit into the form of a dialogue between a sceptical citizen of Antwerp, Menedemus, and Ogygius, a credulous friend who had made the pilgrimage. The great relic which men went to worship at Walsingham was some supposed milk of the Virgin Mary, with regard to which the Colloquy<sup>1</sup> runs thus :—

*Og.*—The milk is kept on the high altar, in the centre of which is Christ ; at his right hand for honour's sake, his Mother ; for the milk personifies the Mother.

*Men.*—It can be easily seen then ?

*Og.*—Inclosed in crystal.

*Men.*—It is then liquid ?

*Og.*—How can you talk of liquid, when it was effused fifteen centuries ago ? It is dried up ; you would say it was ground chalk mixed with white of egg. . . . As soon as the attendant saw us, he came forward, put on his surplice, clapped the stole on his neck, prostrated himself and worshipped : and anon he held out the thrice holy milk for us to kiss.'

Afterwards Ogygius makes an offering, and asks with pious curiosity for the evidence on which he is assured that this is the milk of the Virgin. The attendant looks aghast at the blasphemous enquiry, but being soothed by a few pence refers him to the 'authentic inscription,' which, with some trouble, he deciphers, and from it recounts a long story, the drift of which follows. There was a certain William of Paris, very pious, and a sedulous collector of relics. In the

<sup>1</sup> The translation by Nicholls is adopted.



course of his journeys he visited Constantinople, and was there told by a bishop of this inestimable treasure. William begged half of it, and made his way homeward. After many vicissitudes the treasure was divided again : half of it was placed in the Church of St. Geneviève in Paris, the other half was carried to Walsingham.

‘A very consistent story,’ observes Menedemus. ‘Nay,’ replies Ogygius, ‘lest any incredulity should remain, there are appended names of suffragan bishops, imparting to those who visit it, and do not omit some small offering, as much indulgence as they are empowered to bestow.’

But the rest of the covert ridicule which Erasmus pours on the imposture through the medium of the dialogue must be sought out in the Colloquy. As for the fate of the poor bauble itself a few years later, perhaps it may be traced in a letter from Thacker,<sup>1</sup> one of Cromwell’s agents in the dissolution of monasteries : ‘Sir,—I have received of my fellow, William Lawrence, from Ipswich, an image of our Lady of gold in a tabernacle of silver and gilt, with the feather in the top of it gold ; and a little relic of gold and crystal with our Lady’s milk in it as they say.’ Surely there was not another such in the Eastern counties. So the poor imposture went on its way, and as far as appears was heard of no more.

Great was the Lady of Walsingham, resorted to by peasants, by nobles, and by princes—resorted to in those last days when Queen Katharine wrote to Henry VIII., then absent in France (1513), to tell him of the great victory of Flodden, and ‘praying<sup>2</sup> God to send him home shortly, for without this no joy here can be accomplished ; and for the same I pray, and now go to

<sup>1</sup> Ellis, *Orig. Letters*, iii. 3, 298.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i. No. 32.

our Lady at Walsingham, that I promised so long ago to see.' Great was the Lady of Walsingham, but a slain archbishop was even greater, and Ogygius must tell something of his visit to St. Thomas of Canterbury. He took with him on that visit one Gratian, an Englishman, who is understood to represent Dean Colet.

Ogygius describes the enormous mass of relics accumulated in the Cathedral of Canterbury. The point of the sword which slew Becket—his perforated skull—his hair-shirt and girdles—then 'skulls, jaw-bones, teeth, hands, fingers, entire arms; on all which we devoutly bestowed our kisses. The exhibition seemed likely to last for ever, if my unmanageable companion had not interrupted the zeal of the showman.'

*Men.*—Some Wycliffite I presume?

*Og.*—I do not think so; although he had read Wycliffe's books.

*Men.*—Did he offend the priest?

*Og.*—When an arm was brought forward which had still the bloody flesh adhering to it, he drew back from kissing it, and even betrayed signs of disgust. The priest shut up his treasures.

Then came the display of gold and silver in vast amount.

*Men.*—Was there no kissing here?

*Og.*—No, but another sentiment came into my mind.

*Men.*—What was that?

*Og.*—I sighed that I had no such relics at home.

*Men.*—What an impious thought!

*Og.*—I confess it and I devoutly prayed the saint for pardon.

Presently the figure of the saint, gilt and covered with jewels, is shown them. Here his companion Gratian (Colet) involved them in disgrace by ill-timed questions to the attendant priest.

*Grat.*—Is it true, good father, that Thomas while alive was exceedingly kind to the poor?

*Priest.*—Most true, there are many examples of his beneficence.

*Grat.*—I should not suppose that such a disposition is changed, unless perhaps increased.

The priest assented.

*Grat.*—Since, then, that most holy man was so liberal to the poor whilst he was still poor himself, do you not think that now, when he lacks nothing, he would not take it very contentedly if a poor woman with starving children, or a husband laid up with disease, should take from these great riches some small portion for the relief of her family? I am clearly convinced that the most holy man would rejoice that even when dead he should relieve by his riches the wants of the poor.

Ogygius marks the rising wrath of the priest, which he manages to assuage; and Menedemus enlarges on the excessive costliness of buildings, vestments, altar equipments, golden statues, and organs in a manner which shows what some men even then thought of the architectural and ritualistic extravagance of those days. The friends are then introduced to the martyr's shrine by the prior himself. Of this says Ogygius—'The least valuable portion was gold. Every part glistened, shone, and sparkled with rare and very large jewels. There some monks stood around with much veneration, and we all worshipped. The prior with a white wand pointed out each jewel, most of them offerings by sovereign princes.'

Last of all a black leather box is brought out, opened, and all worship.

*Men.*—What was in it?

*Og.*—Some torn fragments of linen; and most of them retaining marks of dirt.

The personal use by the martyr of these delectable fragments is explained, and Gratian again incurs some disapprobation.

To him, who was a person well known and of no small conse-



quence, the priest graciously offered to present one of the pieces of linen as a most acceptable gift. But Gratian, not sufficiently grateful, drew it together with his fingers, not without some intimation of disgust, and disdainfully replaced it; pouting his lips as if imitating a whistle. My heart was agitated with shame and fear. The prior, however, like a sensible man, pretended not to notice it; and after offering us a cup of wine courteously dismissed us.

Such was the shrine at Canterbury a few years before its destruction; and such a few of the thoughts about it of some who never joined the Reformation.

The great scholar left England in 1514 bent on his priceless work of giving to the world the New Testament in its original Greek. Modern writers have dwelt rather too much on the imperfections of that early edition of Erasmus, imperfections which have somewhat marred the subsequent vernacular translations which in different countries have passed into common use. But, whatever its imperfections, arising from his scanty store of manuscripts and other difficulties, it was a grand occasion for the world when (1516) Erasmus sent forth from the press at Basle the Greek Testament itself. The sentiments of Erasmus about the duty and privilege of the general study of Holy Scripture may be learned from the preface to his second edition, in which he thus writes: 'He is not a Platonist who does not read the works of Plato; is he a Theologian, not to say a Christian, who does not read the written words of Christ? I do not condemn those who are practised in the subtleties of learning. But I believe that the true philosophy of Christ may best be drawn from the Gospels and Apostolic writings. These, used with more prayer than argument, with a desire to be transformed rather than armed, will teach that there is nothing pertaining to the happiness of man which may not be found in its perfection there. We keep letters written by a friend, we



kiss them, we carry them with us, we read them again and again, yet there are thousands of Christians who have acquired other learning, but have never in their whole lives read the Gospels or the Apostolical books. The Mahometans hold their dogmas; the Jews from their cradles learn their own Moses. Why do we not the same for Christ? Oh, that it might come to pass, that as St. Paul wrote, the law of Moses had no glory in comparison of the glory of the Gospel, so all Christians might hold the Gospels and the Apostolic Epistles so holy, that human writings beside them might seem to possess no sanctity.'

The English patrons of Erasmus had done much in providing him with the means for prosecuting this great work. Preeminent among these he placed Archbishop Warham. In the dedication of his Greek Testament to Leo X. from Basle, Feb. 1, 1516, he singled out that prelate for especial praise. The language must indeed be read with a keen remembrance of the adulatory strain which then, and long afterwards, great scholars allowed themselves to use. But with all abatement which may be thought needful on this score, it is pleasant to read the character given to the learning of England, and the degree in which its archbishop contributed to these great results. 'Whatever I have become,' said Erasmus to Leo, 'I owe to William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury, primate of all England in no empty title. In addition to all his other titles and dignities he has been the Mæcenas to learning. Chiefly through him has it been wrought that an island long ago flourishing in men, in arms, and in wealth, now enjoys the blessing of admirable laws, religion, morals, and of genius trained in every kind of literature, so that it may enter the lists on equal terms with any country.'

The reception of the Greek Testament in England was all that could be wished. Not merely Colet and his immediate friends hailed it with joy, but Archbishop Warham recommended it to his suffragans, and it was manifest on all sides that a new era of learning had dawned. Yet the votaries of the ancient scholastic system offered what opposition was in their power. It was said that one of the colleges in Cambridge forbade the book to be brought within its walls, and denunciations were muttered on every side among the theologians, who felt that if such free use of Scripture were allowed their systems were doomed.

With this publication Erasmus may well pass from these pages; in the further preparation for the English Reformation he bore no part.

It may seem paradoxical to claim Sir Thomas More, who died in defending the papal supremacy, as one who helped to prepare the way for changes which he abhorred. Yet he partook of the intellectual life and movement of the reign of Henry VII., which unwittingly was loosening old allegiance, and bringing forward new principles. He deserves notice, even apart from his subsequent eminence and his unhappy fate, as a noble instance of the character which could yet be formed under the influence of the old Church.

Thomas More was the son of an eminent judge, and was born about 1480. In his youth he was placed in the household of Cardinal Morton, where he is said to have attracted the special notice of that great statesman by his wit and extempore power. At Oxford, and afterwards in London, he was one of the literary circle which gathered round Colet and Erasmus. By his father's desire he adopted the law as his profession. He may be said to have led the van of the line of lay-

men who as lawyers and statesmen since his day have guided the administration and policy of England. Yet More hesitated about taking holy orders, and had he done so he might have 'sunk into a saint.' For there was in him a vein of religious enthusiasm which was not balanced by the critical sagacity of Colet and Erasmus. The old religion with its traditionary practices held him to a strict adherence. The hair-shirt<sup>1</sup> and the scourge of discipline were no strangers to his person; and he shared in the Carthusian austerities during several years. But Colet's advice drew him to the freer and more genial married state, and we are indebted to this for the sweetest pictures of home and of family life which the history of those days has handed down to us. For it is not as the wit, the scholar, the lawyer, or the statesman that More is most known now, but yet more widely as the model in evil times of all that is tender and gracious both as father and husband. The one incident of More's public life which lies within the limits of this volume belongs to a matter of greater moment in its consequences to the prosperity of Britain than any other in its long records. Henry VII. had married his elder daughter Margaret to James IV. of Scotland. Their great-grandson, about a century later, united the two crowns which had been so long in fierce antagonism. Henry called a parliament<sup>2</sup> in 1505, and requested a subsidy in aid of the payment of Margaret's dowry. More was present as a member of the House of Commons, and ventured to oppose the king's demand in a speech which established his reputation for eloquence and patriotism, but which placed him in danger and drove him into private life for the short remainder of

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir T. More*, by his great-grandson.

<sup>2</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, i. col. 465.



that reign. His subsequent career of greatness belongs to times beyond the limits of this volume.

If any of his writings may be fitly noticed here, perhaps it may be his famous political romance 'Utopia.' It was published abroad under the inspection of Erasmus in 1516, a date falling within the reign of Henry VIII., but belonging to the earlier days, when as yet the old world, at home and abroad, showed few symptoms to the eye of coming changes. 'Utopia' therefore rather glances at that old world than shows signs of commotion at the coming of the new. The coarser humour of the eccentric Swift vented its political and social satire in like manner in pictures of imaginary lands where Lilliputian or Brobdingnagian manners and institutions are contrasted with the wanderer's account of those of England. More named the island of his fancy *Utopia*, an euphonious Greek compound. With less harmony its more uncouth English translation would be *No-where-land*. At that date Amerigo Vespucci had recently explored part of the coast-line of Brazil, and had left a small fort with a garrison. More imagines one of these Portuguese mariners to have wandered on by land and by sea, until his hap fell upon the land of Utopia. *No-where-land* lay somewhere 'beyond the line equinoctial,' and from it, by way of Ceylon and India, the wanderer found his way back to Europe. He was one such as Kingsley loved to paint. 'He<sup>1</sup> took more thought and care for travelling than for dying, having customably in his mouth these sayings : He that hath no grave is covered with the sky ; and the way to heaven out of all places is of like length and distance. Which fantasy of his (if God had not been his better friend) he had surely bought full dear.'

<sup>1</sup> *Utopia*, Robinson's translation.



More and a merchant of Antwerp encounter this ancient mariner, 'a man well stricken in age, with a black sunburned face and a long beard.' They bring him into a garden, and there on a shady bench the marvellous tale is told. It reflects in many colours the hues and the subjects of discussions which More had heard and shared with the leading spirits of his day. The sagacious experience of Cardinal Morton, the rich illustration of Erasmus, the philosophy of Colet, More's own playful wit, find their full issues. The social problems of mankind are much the same in all ages, though they assume altered proportions, and become in varied degrees menacing at different epochs. A superabundant population pressing hard on food supplies; the origin of the 'dangerous classes' and the best mode of dealing with them; the encouragement of agriculture and its due relation to commerce; coast and sea defence; social customs and education: these and many other questions had found their solution, such as it was, in Utopia. But these things belong to civil history. The religion of the Utopians may rather be noticed here. Their creeds had been very various before the wanderer landed on their shores. But when he brought them the tidings of Christ, 'you will not believe with how glad minds they agreed unto the same.' More's monastic leanings come out in his account of the reason: 'I think this was no small furtherance in the matter, that they heard us say that Christ instituted among his, all things common: and that the same community doth yet remain among the rightest Christian companies.' But the thing most to be remarked is the clear note now first sounded for a full and loving tolerance in matters of religious difference. One convert was sharply punished. He waxed hot, and not only preferred his

new faith, but ‘despised all other, calling them profane, and the followers of them wicked and devilish.’ Him the Utopians ‘condemned into exile, not as a despiser of religion, but as a seditious person, and a raiser up of dissension among the people. For this is one of the ancientest laws among them, that no man shall be blamed for reasoning in the maintenance of his own religion.’ The founder of their commonwealth had ‘made a decree that it should be lawful for every man to favour and follow what religion he would, and that he might do the best he could to bring others to his opinion, so that he did it peaceably, gently, quietly, and soberly. To him that would vehemently and fervently in this cause strive and contend was decreed banishment or bondage. He thought it a very unmeet and foolish thing, and a point of arrogant presumption, to compel all others by violence and threatenings to agree to the same that thou believest to be true. He did well foresee (so that the matter were handled with reason and sober modesty) that the truth of its own power would at the last issue out and come to light. But if contention and debate in that behalf should continually be used, he perceived that then the best and holiest religion would be trodden under foot and destroyed by most vain superstitions.’ The prayers, and the music of Utopia, belong in their best points, it may be hoped, to other lands, where latitude and longitude are less vague in their determination. Of these no account need be given. But this utterance of perfect toleration comes to us from those times like a breath of Eden. For some two centuries longer in No-where-land alone could such a decree be enacted. We have not fully learned the lesson, but we may say that in Thomas More’s own land of England he might now at last in this respect

find the realm which he knew not, and which he therefore called Utopia.

One more reflection must follow. Gladly might the dreamer be left in his land of dreams. But it must be asked how did Thomas More, controversialist, statesman, chancellor, in after years carry out his vision? It must be answered that in bitterness, in wrath, and in fierceness he dealt with the doctrine and the persons of his Protestant opponents. Grant that he must administer the law as he found it, yet still it remains that the law was pressed in all its extremity, and the torture applied with harshness under the auspices of this wanderer into the land of vision. There he had dreamed of toleration, he came back and found himself bound by the unchangeable law of his own Church, and by the statutes of his own land to persecute and slay. If it could only have been said that he obeyed with a sigh, and mitigated the suffering he might not prevent, the breeze wafted from his far away island might have seemed more genial and more true.

Sir Thomas More was linked in death with another who also died honourably for the falling cause which he had faithfully supported through life. Fisher, bishop of Rochester, must be known here not as the controversialist which the subsequent stormy times made him, but as the patron of learning, the faithful almoner of the Lady Margaret, the bishop of the highest moral type of that olden school. That lady's foundations and Fisher's part in them have already<sup>1</sup> come under notice in certain other lights. But the man and his work need some further and more explicit account. The occasion of his introduction to his great friend and patroness was an official visit to Court as Proctor of the

<sup>1</sup> Pages 251-253.



University of Cambridge. The cost of his journey to Greenwich and back has been handed down in these items:—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
For the hire of two horses for eleven days . . .	vii	o
For breakfast before the passage to Greenwich . . .	o	iii
For boat hire there and back . . . . .	o	iv
I dined with my lady the king's mother. . . . .		

That dinner led to great results; for the Lady Margaret made Fisher her confessor, and he became her confidential adviser thenceforth in the disposal of her munificent gifts. It was by his counsel that she made the University of Cambridge the chief recipient of her bounty, instead of the wealthy abbey of Westminster. But as she had obtained the king's consent to her previous intention, it was needful to receive his sanction to the change. And thus he gave it: <sup>1</sup> 'Madam, my most entirely well-beloved Lady and Mother, I recommend me unto you in the most humble and lowly wise that I can, beseeching you of your daily and continual blessings. By your confessor I have received your good and most loving writing, and by the same have heard at good leisure such credence as he would show unto me on your behalf, and thereupon have sped him without delay according to your noble petition and desire. All which things according to your desire and pleasure I have with all my heart and goodwill given and granted to you. And, my Dame, not only in this but in all other things that I may know should be to your honour and pleasure, and the weal of your soul I shall be as glad to please you as your heart can desire. . . . Madame, I have encumbered you now with this my long writings, but methinks I can do no less, considering that

<sup>1</sup> Ellis, *Orig. Letters*, i. 43, 1st series.



it is so seldom that I do write. Wherefore I beseech you to pardon me, for, verily, Madame, my sight is nothing so perfect as it hath been, and I know well it will impair daily. Wherefore I trust that you will not be displeased though I write not so often with my own hand, for on my faith I have been three days or I could make an end of this letter.'

The following must not be taken as the Lady Margaret's reply, for the thanks relate to another matter; but it was thus she thanked her son.<sup>1</sup> 'My own sweet and most dear king and all my worldly joy, in as humble manner as I can think I recommend me to your Grace, and most heartily beseech our Lord to bless you. And, my good heart, where that you say that the French king hath at this time given me courteous answer, I beseech your Grace to give him your favourable thanks. I wis, my very joy, as I oft have showed, and I fortune to get this, there shall neither be that nor any good I have but it shall be yours. But, my dear heart, I will no more encumber your Grace with further writing on this matter. . . . Our Lord give you as long good life, health and joy, as your most noble heart can desire, with as hearty blessings as our Lord hath given me power to give you. At Collyweston the 13th day of January, by your faithful true bedewoman and humble mother,

MARGARET R.'

Ellis notes that she signed this letter as queen. But, with submission to an eminent antiquary, it may be asked, Is this so? Does not the *R.* stand for *Richmond* rather than for *Regina*? The place of the initial is reversed in the following letter to the Earl of Ormond in France, which shows that the Lady Margaret could be playful as well as grave, and will illustrate her varying

<sup>1</sup> Ellis, i. 22, 1st series.

mode of signature.<sup>1</sup> Was the saintly lady a little proud of her delicate hand?

‘My Lord Chamberlain, I thank you heartily that you list so soon to remember me with my gloves, the which were right good, save they were too much for my hand. I think the ladies in that part be great ladies all, and according to their great estate they have great personages. Blessed be God, the king, the queen, and all our sweet children<sup>2</sup> be in good health. The queen hath been a little crazed [weak], but now she is well, God be thanked, whom I pray give you good speed in your great matters, and bring you well and soon home. Written at Sheen the 25th day of April.

‘M. RICHMOND.’

The Lady Margaret was herself an authoress, as became a patroness of learning, but devout in this respect as in all the rest of her closing days. There is the ‘Mirror of Gold,’ ‘translated out of French into English by the right excellent Princess Margaret, mother to our sovereign lord King Henry VII. It shall be divided into seven chapters after the seven days of the week. To the intent that the sinful soul, soiled and defouled by sin, may in every chapter have a new mirror; wherein he may behold and consider the face of his soul.’ There is also the fourth book of the ‘Imitation of Christ,’ ‘imprinted at the commandment of the most excellent Princess Margaret, &c., and by the same princess it was translated out of French into English in form and manner ensuing.’

In 1504 the see of Rochester became vacant, and

<sup>1</sup> Hymers, *Funeral Sermon of Lady Margaret*, 167.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur [married Cath. of Arragon]. Henry [VIII]. Margaret [m. James IV. of Scotland]. Mary [Queen of France].

the king wrote the following letter to his mother:—<sup>1</sup>  
‘Madame,—An I thought I should not offend you, which I will never do wilfully, I am well minded to promote Master Fisher, your confessor, to a bishopric. And I assure you, Madam, for no other cause, but for the great and singular virtue that I know and see in him, as well in cunning and natural wisdom, and specially for his good and virtuous living and conversation. And by the promotion of such a man, I know well it should courage many others to live virtuously, and to take such ways as he doth, which should be a good example to many others hereafter. Howbeit, without your pleasure known, I will not move him nor tempt him therein. I have in my days promoted many a man unadvisedly, and I would now make some recompense to promote some good and virtuous men, which I doubt not should best please God, who ever preserve you in good health and long life.’

The English of Henry VII. is even now easy and natural, and with a little change could scarcely be distinguished from modern writing. So Fisher became Bishop of Rochester. Unlike most prelates of his time, to say nothing of later days, he would not desert his see, though Court favour would have moved him to more wealthy preferment. He is said to have declared of his poorly-endowed bishopric that ‘he would not change his poor old wife, to whom he had been so long wedded, for the richest widow in England.’

At this time the Lady Margaret’s plans for the advancement of learning in Cambridge were making good progress. Christ’s College was completed, and in the year 1506 the king was present when it was opened. This is the date of the erection of Great St. Mary’s, the

<sup>1</sup> Hymers, from St. John’s Coll. Register.

university church, to which both the king and his mother were contributors.

These foundations excited the admiration of Erasmus, who wrote:—‘God inspired that woman with a thought which was by no means womanish. For whereas other princesses are wont to bequeath large estates for the building large monasteries, this lady applied all her study to the most holy thing of all, the instructing the people in the Gospel philosophy. That holy heroine and the bishop, who was a singular example of true piety, judged right—that there was nothing which could more contribute to amend the people’s manners than the dispensing the seed of the evangelical doctrine by fit and proper preachers.’

The yet larger foundation of St. John’s College was designed by the Lady Margaret, but left at her death so incomplete that nothing but the untiring labour and devoted urgency of Bishop Fisher availed to carry through the intentions of his royal mistress. Henry VII. died April 22, 1509, and the Lady Margaret followed him not many weeks later. Over each of them Fisher pronounced the funeral sermons,<sup>1</sup> which have been reprinted and are full of interest. The difficulties which Fisher encountered in dealing with the new king, with the bishop of Ely, and with the pope for the needful licenses to accomplish the intentions of the deceased lady towards St. John’s College, have been detailed at great length in the college history. But they were surmounted at length, and in the year 1516 the first court of the college was opened by the bishop of Rochester in person. It has found many benefactors since that day, and has enlarged its borders, but it owes its very life to Bishop Fisher.

<sup>1</sup> Hymers, *Funeral of Margaret Countess of Richmond*.



The relation of this prelate to the older theology might have produced disinclination to the new learning. But, on the contrary, he was a patron of Erasmus, and even consulted the great scholar about the possibility of his learning Greek. Erasmus and More selected a tutor whom they thought equal to deal with such a pupil. But the tutor hesitated. More begged him to give the bishop a month's trial. This was still worse: the tutor replied,<sup>1</sup> 'that learning Greek was a thing of a complicated nature and full of variety. He believed that the bishop was of a singular genius, and fit for greater things than this. But still a month was too little time to make any progress. Grocyn, Linacre, Tonstall, Pace, More, and even Erasmus himself, spent more time on this matter. He was not ashamed to own that after six or seven years about it he was still ignorant of many things. It would be well, therefore, for the bishop to wait for a skilled teacher from Italy who was willing to stay with him long enough for real results.' Erasmus, however, still pressed the request. It appears that in fact Fisher did acquire some knowledge of the language he desired. It may not have amounted to much, but it would serve the purpose which Erasmus urged when he said, 'Suppose the bishop never so little advanced in these studies, yet it would be of no little service to stir and push forward the minds of the young, that so great a man learned Greek.'

Happy would it have been for this exemplary man had he, like Colet, rested from his labours ere the time of distress came, when he must walk according to the light of his conscience even though it led him to the scaffold. But these things are beyond the present limits. He must be left now in the midst of the days

<sup>1</sup> Lewis, *Life of Fisher*, vii.

when those grey Tudor towers at Cambridge rose sharp and bright in the newness of their masonry, and the good bishop looked round with satisfaction at what he had accomplished, mixed haply with regret that the gracious Margaret's gifts had been pared down so closely by her grudging successor. Was he born too late?—or was he born too early? Too late for the fruition of the faith which he knew and grasped so strongly—too early for the clearer light which was dawning? Let not either be said. It is but human reckoning. According to his light he served his Master, and to 'his own Master he standeth or falleth.'

It seems to be leaving a tale half told to close the narration here. But with Warham at Canterbury, and Fisher at Rochester—with the star of Wolsey rising on the horizon of a new and glittering reign, we are conscious that new times are at hand, the work of preparation drawing to a close, the old world about to pass away. We look back with our knowledge of the issues of Providence, and may see for many a century of darkened faith, that

On the glimmering limit far withdrawn  
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.

It was a tempestuous morning that followed that long and ominous dawn, though it led to a brighter and clearer day for the English Church and nation. Of that morning, possibly of that day, it may be permitted to give some account, if God will, in the residue of the days which may yet remain to him who in much love to his Church and nation has written these portions of their ancient history.

# INDEX.

---

## ABU

**A**BUSIVE language in controversy, 321  
 Act de Heretico Comburendo, 326, 346  
 Aidan settles in Lindisfarne, 49; dies, 50  
 Alban, St., legend of, 16  
 Alban, St., Abbey, accused of immorality, 411-415  
 Aleuin, 88  
 Aldhelm, 77, 94, 95  
 Alexandria, Gregory's letter to its bishop, 40  
 Alfred, king, 115-117  
 Alien priories, 147, 351  
 Amphibalus, St., legend of, 19  
 Anselm, early life, 169; his works, 169-171; made archbishop, 173; contends with Rufus, 175; goes to Rome, 178, 181  
 Architecture, Norman, 153  
 Arles, Council of, British bishops present at, 8  
 Arthur, prince, marries Katherine of Arragon, 392  
 Arundel, archbishop, decree against translations of Scripture, 321  
 Ashton, a Lollard, 323  
 Asser, 117  
 Augustine lands in Britain, 39; is consecrated, 40; meets British bishops, 36; dies, 42

**B**ALDWIN, archbishop, goes on crusade, 208  
 Ball, John, insurgent priest, 337  
 Bassett, Fulk, bishop of London, 224  
 Bath and Wells, title of the see, 207  
 Beaufort, cardinal, 359, 362, 363  
 Beaulieu monastery founded, 216

## CAR

Becket, 192; archdeacon, 193; archbishop, 193; maintains clerical privileges, 196; at Clarendon and Northampton, 199; exiled, 200; returns, 201; slain, 202; canonized, 204  
 Bede, the Venerable, 80, 81  
 Benedict Biscop, 77  
 Benedict of Nursia, 239  
 Bernard, St., 241  
 Birinus preaches in Wessex, 52  
 Bishoprics, Saxon, list of, 87  
 Bishops, their appointment in Saxon times, 130  
 Black Prince, 292, 293, 333  
 Bodmin, bishop of, 121  
 Boniface, apostle of Germany, 104  
 Boniface, archbishop of Canterbury, 223  
 Bouchier, archbishop, 370-375  
 Bradwardine, archbishop, 283-285  
 Bregwin, archbishop, 102  
 Bristol, abbey of St. Augustine's, visitation of, 342  
 British Church, earliest notices of, 3, 4; its representatives meet Augustine, 36  
 Brute, Walter, a Welsh Lollard, 324  
 Bulls, political, 397-398  
 Burial place of archbishops, 101

**C**ÆDMON, 79  
 Cambridge University founded, 234  
 Canonisation, 90  
 Canon Law, 143, 188-192  
 Canterbury Shrine, 438-440  
 Capitation Tax, 334  
 Carlisle, its bishopric founded, 162

## CAR

- Carthusians, 240  
 Cedd preaches to East Saxons, 51  
 Celibacy of clergy, 128, 157  
 Chantries, 251  
 Chapters of cathedrals, 167-168  
 Charter of Henry I., 180  
 Chester, its bishopric, 159  
 Chicheley, archbishop, 356-367  
 Cistercians, 240  
 Civil Law, its nature and study, 186-188  
 Clement VII., pope, 339  
 Clerical exemptions, 194-198, 285-288, 407-411  
 Clerical privilege in Saxon times, 127  
 Cloveshoo, 67  
 Coifi abandons idolatry, 46  
 Colet, dean, 423-432  
 Colleges founded, 403-404  
 Colman, bishop of Lindisfarne, 53  
 Columba settles in Iona, 26; dies, 29, 56  
 Common Law, 187  
 Confiscation of church property, 346-351  
 Congé d'élire, 182  
 Constance, Council of, 357, 399  
 Constantine's donation, 142  
 Constantinople taken, 420  
 Constitutions of Clarendon, 198  
 Convocation, 259-261  
 Courtenay, archbishop, 305, 340-344  
 Courts Ecclesiastical separated from Civil, 156  
 Coventry, its bishopric, 160; Parliament at, 346  
 Crediton, bishop of, 121  
 Crusades, their results, 255  
 Crusading bishops, 208, 339  
 Cup in the Eucharist, 267-268  
 Cuthbert, archbishop, 101  
 Cutlibert, St., 106-110

**D**EAN, archbishop, 392  
 Decretals, the false, 142  
 Desecration of St. Paul's, 343  
 Deusdedit, archbishop, 63  
 Doctrines of Saxon Church, 133  
 Dominic, and Dominicans, 245  
 Dorchester, bishopric founded, 53  
 Dunstan, 95, 118  
 Durham, its bishopric, 114

## HEN

- E**ADMER, 171  
 Easter, British computation of, 33  
 Edmund, St., 97, 98  
 Edward, the Confessor, 119-124  
 Edward I., 256-273  
 Edward II., 273  
 Edward III., 274-293  
 Edward IV., 407  
 Edwin, king of Northumbria, 44, 47  
 Egbert, archbishop, 82  
 Egbert, king, 113  
 Elfric, on the Eucharist, 135  
 Elphege, St., 96-97  
 Ely, bishopric founded, 162  
 Erasmus, 432-442  
 Erkenwald, St., 91  
 Ethelbert, king, 38  
 Ethelburga, 100  
 Etheldreda, 100  
 Eton, foundation of, 367-369  
 Exeter, bishopric founded, 121

**F**ASTING, its supposed power, 111  
 Felix in East Anglia, 52  
 Finan, bishop, 50  
 Fisher, bishop, 447-454  
 Folly, Praise of, 434  
 Fountain's Abbey, 242  
 Fourfold meaning of Scripture, 425  
 Francis of Assisi, 244  
 Friesland, conversion of, 103  
 Fulk Basset, bishop of London, 224  
 Fursey in East Anglia, 52

**G**ERMANUS visits Britain, 9  
 Gildas, 5, 7  
 Glastonbury, legend, 12  
 Gloucester, Duke Humphrey, 362-363  
 Greek learning revived, 420-423  
 Greek Testament printed, 440  
 Gregory sends Augustine to Britain, 39  
 Grimbold, 117  
 Grocyn, 422  
 Grostête, bishop of Lincoln, 227-231

**H**ADRIAN, abbot, 65  
 Hatfield, synod, 67  
 Henry I., 179-184



## HEN

Henry II., 194-204  
 Henry III., 217-231  
 Henry IV., 345-354, 356  
 Henry V., 356-361  
 Henry VI., 361-381  
 Henry VII., 386-416  
 Hilda, St., 100  
 Hildebrand, pope, 143  
 Honorius, archbishop, 47, 48  
 Hubert, Walter, archbishop, 208

## IMPROPRIATIONS, 356

Innocent III., pope, 210-217  
 Interdict in England, 212, 213  
 Insurrection, Wat Tyler's, 335, 336, 337  
 Investiture, 166, 167, 180, 182  
 Iona, 27  
 Irish monasticism, 24  
 Islip, archbishop, 285

## JAMBERT, archbishop, 102

Jews banished, 269, 270  
 John, king, 210-217  
 Justus, bishop of Rochester, 42;  
 archbishop, 44

## KEMP, archbishop, 369

Kirkstall Abbey, 242

## LAMBETH, acquired by Canterbury, 207

Lanfranc, 151-164  
 Langham, archbishop, 289  
 Langton, archbishop, 211-217  
 Laurentius, archbishop, 43  
 Legates, papal, 183, 184, 401  
 Lichfield, archbishop of, 86  
 Linaere, 422  
 Lindisfarne, 49  
 Lincoln, bishopric founded, 162  
 Lollards, 323-332  
 Lucius and Pope Eleutherus, 10

## MAGNA CHARTA, 214, 215

Margaret, Countess of Richmond, 251-253; 403; 448-452  
 Martin, papal nuncio, 217-219  
 Martyrs, Lollard, 328, 331, 393, 394

## POL

Mellitus, bishop of London, 42;  
 archbishop, 44  
 Mendicant orders, 238, 244-250  
 Montfort, Simon de, 220-225  
 Morals, laxity of clerical, 409-416  
 More, Sir T., 442-447  
 Mortmain, 263-264; 402-404  
 Morton, archbishop, 385-391

## NINIAN preaches in Galloway, 23

Norwich, bishopric founded, 162  
 Nothelm, archbishop, 82  
 Nunneries, dissolved, 404

## OATH of allegiance to the pope, by archbishops, 395-397

Odo, archbishop, 118  
 Oswald, king of Northumbria, 48-50; 58  
 Oswy, king of Northumbria, 51  
 Otho the White, papal legate, 221  
 Ottoboni, legate, 226  
 Oxford University, founded, 234

## PALLIUM, 41

Palladius, 23  
 Pandects of Justinian, 186  
 Pandulph, 212, 213  
 Papacy, rise of, 138, 141  
 Papal authority in Saxon Church, 129  
 Papal exactions, 220, 398  
 Papal schism, 339, 357  
 Parishes, origin of, 67, 125, 126  
 Parson of the parish, 355  
 Paschal Controversy, 34, 54  
 Patrick, St., 23  
 Paul, St., in Britain, 11  
 Paul's Cross, 370  
 Paulinus, archbishop, 44  
 Peadra baptised, 51  
 Peckham, archbishop, 266  
 Pecoock, bishop, 370-380  
 Pelagius, 8  
 Penda, king of Mercia, 50, 51  
 Penitentials, 68-72  
 Persecution by Christians begins, 138-140  
 Picts converted, 28  
 Pluralists, canon against, 222  
 Poll tax, 334

## PON

Pontigny, St. Edmund of, 223  
 Poor priests of Wycliffe, 306, 313, 326  
 Popes, elected by cardinals, 145  
 Præmunire, 278, 279, 364, 406  
 Printing invented, 420  
 Provisions, 228, 275-278, 280-282, 405, 406  
 Purvey, 323

**R**AMSBURY ceases to be a bishopric, 123  
 Rectories, 353  
 Remigius, bishop, 162  
 Repingdon, 323  
 Rich, archbishop, 222  
 Richard II., 345  
 Rochester, bishopric founded, 42

**S**ARUM, its bishopric founded, 158  
 Sautrey condemned, 327  
 Scholasticism, 234-238  
 Scots occupy Argyleshire, 25  
 Scotus Erigena, 117  
 Scrope, archbishop, executed, 352  
 Sherborne ceases to be a bishop's see, 123  
 Simony of kings and ecclesiastics, 383-385

Sion monastery, 351  
 Smithfield, executions in, 327  
 Spencer, bishop of Norwich, 337-340

Stafford, archbishop, 366  
 Star Chamber, 389, 390  
 Statesmen, school of eminent, 387  
 Statute de Heretico Comburendo, 325

Stephen, King of England, 185  
 Stigand, archbishop, 147-149  
 Stratford, archbishop, 283  
 Submission of King John to Pandulph, 212

Sudbury, archbishop, 290, 334, 335  
 Sussex, conversion of, 75  
 Swithin, St., 93  
 Synods of Canterbury, 66, 67

**T**ATWINE, archbishop, 82  
 Temples not to be destroyed, 42  
 Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, 185

## WYC

Theodore, archbishop, 64, 66, 72  
 Theodosian Code, 139, 186  
 Tintern Abbey, 242  
 Tithe, 129  
 Toleration, 446-447  
 Tonsure, varieties of, 65  
 Translations of Scripture condemned, 321  
 Triads, Welsh, supposed origin of Christianity in Britain, 12  
 Turks, subsidies to resist, 398, 399  
 Tyler's rebellion, 335  
 Tyndale on literal sense of Scripture, 425

**U**NIVERSITIES, their origin, 232-234  
 — decay, 420  
 Urban II., pope, 175, 178  
 Urban VI., pope, 339  
 Use of Sarum, 163  
 Utopia, 444-447

**V**ACARIUS lectures on civil law, 186  
 Vicarages, 354  
 Vitalian, pope, consecrates Theodore, 64

**W**ALSINGHAM, pilgrimage to, 435-437

Warelwast, William, 181  
 Warham, archbishop, 392  
 Werburgh, St., 159-160  
 Wessex converted, 52  
 Westminster Abbey, founded, 120  
 Whitby, Council of, 53  
 Whitlesey, archbishop, 289  
 Wight, Isle of, converted, 75  
 Wilfrid, 53, 73-76  
 William Rufus, 172-179  
 William the Conqueror, 145-147; his ecclesiastical policy, 155; dies, 163  
 Willibrord 103  
 Winchelsey, archbishop, 270-273  
 Wulfstan, St., 149-151  
 Wycliffe, 294; his character, 295; attacks the mendicants, 297; on the papacy, 299; summoned to St. Paul's, 302; bulls against him,

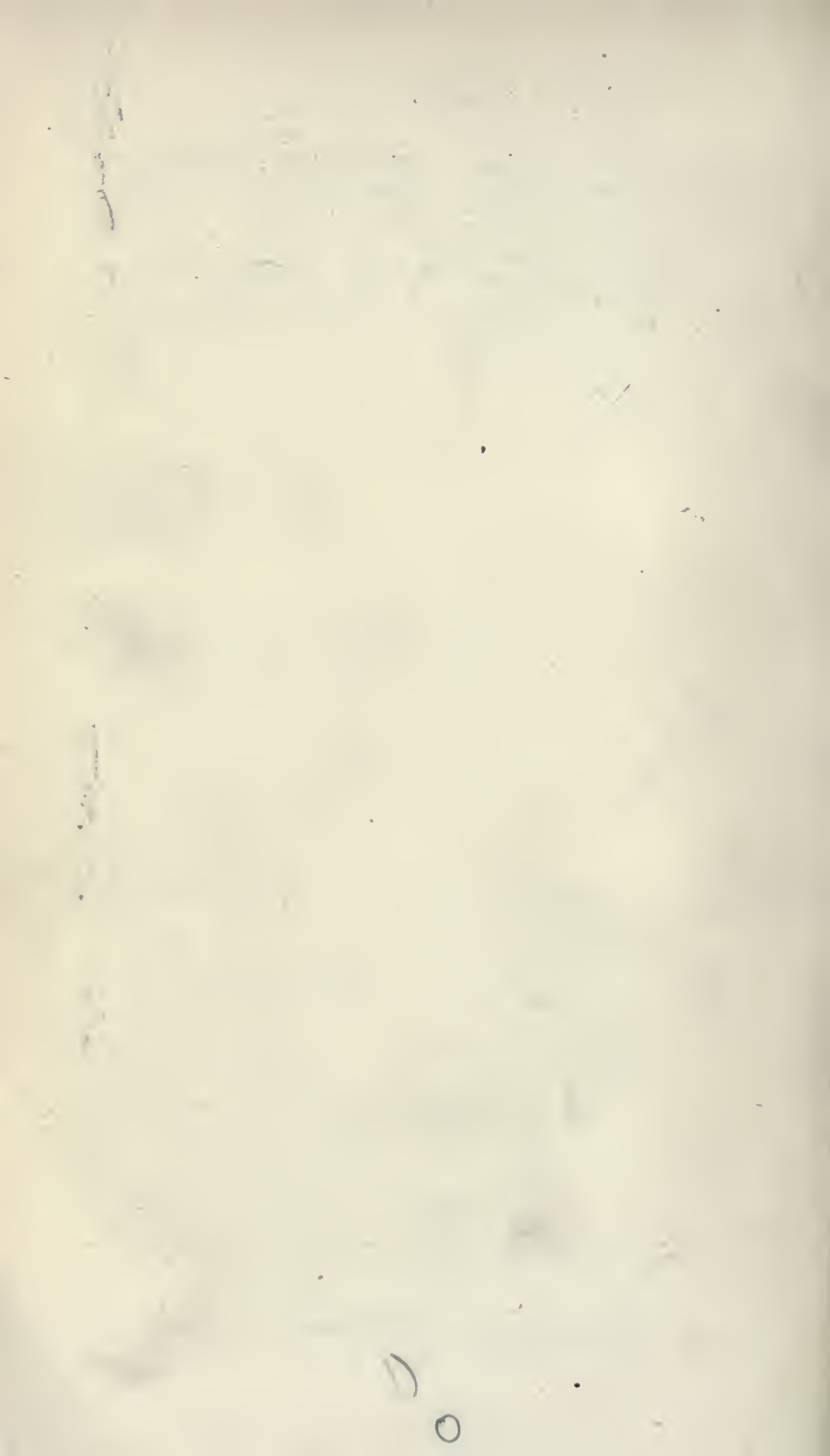
## WYC

303; summoned to Lambeth, 304; condemned, 305; his poor priests, 306-313; his supposed recantation, 307; his literary style, 309; on baptism, 311; on confirmation, 311; on purgatory, 311; on orders, 312; on the authority of Scripture, 314; on church property, 315; his translation of the

## YOR

Bible, 317-321; death and disinterment, 322  
Wykeham, William of, 341

**YORK**, foundation of its archbishopric, 83  
York, rivalry with Canterbury, 83-86









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